Marxism Today

heoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party
ctober, 1973 20 pence

Editorial Comments

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE WORKING CLASS TODAY

MAURICE DOBB

"GRUNDRISSE"

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S THERE A THEORY OF ART IN MARX?

Discussion:

ARSHALL HARRIS
ETTY REID } Marxism and the Family

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 17, Number 10

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Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS

Subscription rates £2.90 per annum

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Editorial Comments

DESPITE the prognostications of a split in the 105th Congress of the TUC by capitalist media spokesmen, the essential unity on basic issues of policy was preserved. Neither Heath, nor the right-wing, who strove to halt the left trend, can take much comfort from the decisions.

In total they represent the consolidation and extension of policies advocated by the left, and differences that did emerge were dealt with in a way that preserved unity so essential for the next stage of the battle.

The positive decisions included using industrial action in support of increased pensions; the rejection of wage restraint and the government's Phase II policies; food subsidies and the freezing of prices and rents; extension of nationalisation and curbing the powers of the monopolies, which strengthens the fight in the whole movement on this fundamental issue, and will have an impact on the Labour Party Conference; opposition to Britain's membership of the EEC and re-affirmed votes for non-participation by the TUC in any of its institutions. Of special importance is the case for strengthening international trade union unity and solidarity with the Chilean Popular Unity, coupled with support for the International Tribunal to be set up to try fascist dictator General Franco. Efforts to reverse the movement's decisions of non-co-operation with the Industrial Relations Act adopted at the last Congress did not succeed, the vote for non-appearance at NIRC being greater this year.

The arguments for talking with the Government were in essence between those who oppose a deal being done with Heath that would mean acceptance of wage restraint in return for concessions, and those who see the talks as an avenue for class collaboration. The fact that the talks will go on, albeit on the demands of the TUC, in no way alters the criticism that they serve to dampen the movement at a time when offensive action is required, especially on wages. Thus the proposition, which should be taken up throughout the movement, to recall Congress, is an important step in releasing the power of the movement for action.

Following immediately on Congress comes the threat of industrial action by Civil Servants and the presentation of the Engineers' and Miners' claims which will have a profound effect in challenging the wages and economic policies of the Government, thus opening up the possibility of advancing the whole movement to force a General Election and the return of a new Labour Government committed to the kind of radical alternative policy the movement now demands.

EXTEND AND DEMOCRATISE NATIONALISATION

Fifty years ago the 100 largest manufacturing companies produced 15 per cent of manufacturing output. By 1950 they still produced only 20 per cent. But, with the explosion of mergers and takeovers, by 1970, the top 100 accounted for one half of manufacturing output, and since then the process is accelerating.

Indeed by 1980, if acceleration continues at the same rate, the top 100 would account for two-thirds of our manufacturing output, and, incidentally, United States capitalists would own nearly one quarter of British manufacturing industry.

With such figures the most recent Communist Party pamphlet puts a pressing case for the rapid extension of nationalisation and for nationalisation of a new democratised type.[1]

The author, Tony Chater, analyses the rapid growth of the giant multinational firms:

> "which pose a grave threat to the ability of national governments to control their economies, the balance of payments, full employment and investment policies, the location of industry and other key questions."

The power of the multinationals, he argues, is so great and extending so rapidly that there is only one really effective way to exercise public control and that is through nationalisation. A policy for large-scale nationalisation should cover banking, insurance, electronics, computers, chemicals

[1] Tony Chater—*Public Ownership and Control: A Communist View*, CPGB, 12p.

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(including drugs), shipbuilding, aircraft, transport, fuel and power production, motors and other key sectors of engineering, urban land, except that of owner-occupiers, and the building and building materials industry. The pamphlet discusses the details.

But the issue is not just *extended* nationalisation. There is a type of nationalisation, and we should know this well from bitter experience, that is dear to the right-wing Labour leaders, and easily integrated within the capitalist system.

What is needed is nationalisation in a deeply democratised form:

> "the nationalised industries must be organised to serve the people, not big business as has happened in the past. This means removing the burdens of heavy interest charges and compensation which have dogged the existing nationalised industries. It means reorganising them on democratic lines, with governing boards made up of workers and technicians from the trade unions concerned, loyal to the concept of nationalisation as a force for social change, and operating their industry according to a national plan arrived at democratically by the community as a whole."

CASTRO ATTACKS THE "TWO IMPERIALISMS" THEORY

On July 26th this year the Cuban people celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Attack on the Moncada Garrison, a historic date in the annals of Cuba's fight for liberation.

We hope in a later issue to publish, in part at least, the moving speech made by Fidel Castro at the anniversary ceremony held in the old garrison, today transformed into a school.

He touched on many points. Speaking on the role of imperialism, and of United States imperialism in the first place, he totally rejected the so-called "two imperialisms" approach used to attack the role of the Soviet Union in international affairs:

> "Imperialist policy is the same everywhere. It opposes the people who fight for their freedom. That is why we do not understand the strange thesis about two alleged imperialisms, presented by some leaders who consider themselves part of the Third World, aimed at putting the USSR on the same level as the United States. All they do with this is to serve the only real imperialism and isolate their peoples.
>
> "This thesis, which is reactionary in itself, is the exclusive fruit of the ideology and intrigues of bourgeois theoreticians and of imperialism. It is aimed at promoting division and distrust among revolutionary forces on an international level and separating the liberation movements from the socialist states."

Without the October Revolution and the achievements of the USSR in defeating fascism and building socialism, Fidel Castro continued:

> "it would have been impossible to end colonialism and liberate scores of peoples everywhere.
>
> "It must never be forgotten that the arms which Cuba used to crush the mercenaries at Giron and defend itself from the United States, the arms that are used by the Arab peoples to resist imperialist aggression, those used by the African patriots to fight against Portuguese Colonialism and those which were used by the Vietnamese in their heroic, extraordinary and victorious struggle, came from the socialist countries and basically from the Soviet Union.
>
> "Separating the peoples from their natural allies is equivalent to disarming, isolating and defeating them. It is an ostrich-like policy. That is the worst possible service that can be given to the cause of national liberation."

MORAL AND MATERIAL INCENTIVES

Later in his speech Castro discussed an issue which has often caused controversy in the international communist movement—the questions of moral and material incentives in the building of a socialist society.

Of course, he explained, our dream for the future is to advance towards a *communist* society, where everyone will be able to contribute according to their capacity and receive according to their needs. But at present the Cuban people are in the *socialist* stage of the revolution, developing a *socialist* society, where the form of distribution is from each according to their capacity, from each according to their work.

In the coming years, he said, it will be our duty to achieve peak efficiency in the use of economic and human resources:

> "We must bravely correct any idealist errors we may have made in the handling of the economy."

It is true, he added, that many of our workers are real examples of communists because of their attitudes towards life, their advanced awareness and their extraordinary solidarity:

> "They are the vanguard of what all society will one day be like. But, if we think and act as if that was the conduct of every member of society, we would be guilty of idealism and the results would be that the greatest share of the social load would unjustly fall

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on the best, without any moral results in the awareness of the most backward, and it would have equally negative effects on the economy.

"Together with moral incentive, we must also use material incentive, without abusing either one, because the former would lead us to idealism, while the latter would lead to individual selfishness.

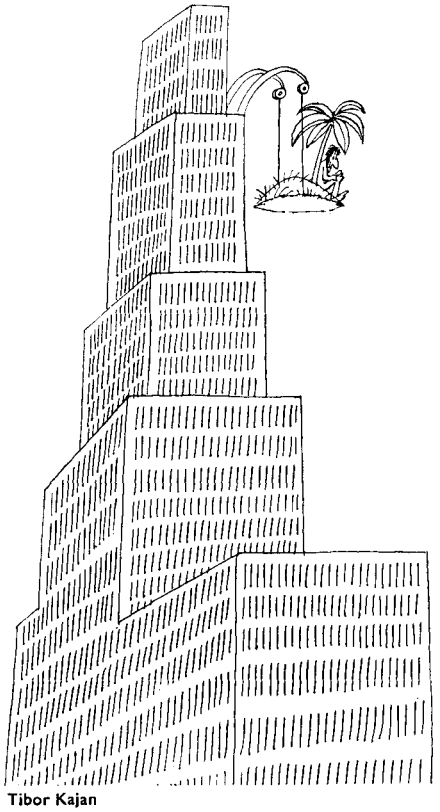
"We must act in such a way that economic incentives will not become the exclusive motivation of man, nor moral incentives serve to have some hive off the work of the rest."

URBAN RENEWAL?

Anyone who, over the last decade, has lived in one of our cities, will know what is meant by "urban renewal": the destruction of acres of buildings (not by any means all of them old or decrepit): the virtual depopulation of enlarged central areas: the demolition of thousands of working-class homes and little shops; and their replacement by multi-storey offices, tower-blocks, supermarkets and motorways. Those who travel abroad will recognise the same phenomenon in other capitalist countries, and in Paris the process is now well under way.

We recently reviewed the first fruits of a research programme which is being undertaken at the French *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* and two further works from the same source[2] will reward any serious student of the subject. "Urban Renewal in Paris" attempts a sociological interpretation of the whole process, and number three in the series looks in detail at what, in this country, planners would call "comprehensive development areas".

The conclusions amply bear out our own experience that "everything is ultimately for the benefit of finance-capital in the best finance-capitalist world", but the techniques of investigation and the complexity of detail revealed suggest that comparable studies here would be amply worthwhile. Anyone thinking of undertaking them would do well to read these books first.



Tibor Kajan

MAD METROPOLIS

And in relation to the environmental threat in our great modern cities we strongly recommend the dire warnings of seven Hungarian cartoonists presented by Corvina Press of Budapest under the title *Metropolis.*

Do not be put off by lack of fluency in the Hungarian language, the pictures speak for themselves. The pith of the warning is well summed up in the short introduction:

Metropolis: forest of windows and houses, trackless forest of cars and men, ultra-modern jungle.

Where should we put cars and litter, books and trams? Where should people go to: children and the aged, the live and the dead? From where should we take sufficient water, from where can we take sufficient air? How far can grey concrete stretch? When will bulldozers consume the last green morsel of nature?

Metropolis: air pollution and water pollution, bankruptcy of traffic, noise damage.

A question mark is wedged amongst the exclamation marks of skyscrapers: what's to become of the city, what's to become of you, man of the metropolis?

In the labyrinth snare of multi-level crossings where does your road lead? Where can you be alone in the stormy, choppy ocean of men? But you are alone: the more people surge around you, the more you are left to yourself. You become uniformly square, like houses. Aeroplanes revolve around your head—you feed them like your ancestors fed birds. The roar of giant machines is your birdsong. Where do you find trees, grass, flowers?

[2] F. Godard *et al: La Renovation Urbaine a Paris;* and Edmund Preteceille: *La Production des Grands Ensembles;* both published by Mouton & Cie, Paris at 28 fr each.

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György Varnai

Here are the heavy urban figures of Balázs-Piri, the nostalgic drawings of Hegedüs (HiHi), the silent exclamation marks and shouting dashes of Kaján, Réber's lines of concrete, Sajdik's building-brick game, Várnai's bitter visions, Vasvari's lines drawn with a pen dipped in loneliness.[3]

> "They are anti-blueprints, negative models. Let us *not* develop cities like this. Let our city not be like this.
>
> "Because Budapest is still an adolescent large town—not a fully grown metropolis—one can sense from the drawings that most of the experience is not derived from direct perception. . . . The metropolis, the danger of alienation—is still a warning question-mark for us."

But for us in Heath's Britain it is no question mark, rather an urgent call to action.

WILLIAM BLAKE—POET, PROPHET AND REVOLUTIONARY

In November Lawrence & Wishart will publish a book about William Blake, containing the most thorough and complete study yet attempted of the whole system of ideas and of social action which was expressed in Blake's poetry and engravings. The author, G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, is a lecturer at Edinburgh University.[4]

William Blake is an enigma in both literature and art. For some he is a mystic, withdrawn from worldly affairs into a "Heaven" and "Hell" of his own. But others have seen him as a man passionately concerned with struggle against the existing social system. This book demonstrates that he was indeed no mystic, but a social critic and revolutionary. "Empire is no more! And now the lion and wolf shall cease" was his "prophesy" at the end of his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*

In expounding Blake's social philosophy, Sabri-Tabrizi concentrates attention to begin with on the meaning of his key ideas of "Heaven" and "Hell", which recur in his writings. And this leads to a very illuminating discussion about Blake's relations with Swedenborg. Those who have considered Blake a Swedenborgian mystic are shown to have been completely wrong. Blake opposed Swedenborg; and his use of Swedenborgian images of "Heaven" and "Hell", "Angels", "Devils" and "The Last Judgment" was to expose Swedenborg's essentially class-biassed and reactionary outlook and to propound a totally contrary standpoint.

In a series of chapters, and with copious quotations from Blake's writings, Sabri-Tabrizi presents Blake as "a social critic who opposed class society and its philosophical systems". Indeed, the obscurities which many feel in the images employed by Blake in his poetry become, as Blake undoubtedly intended, transparent and the social meaning comes through clearly and incisively. Thus the more familiar "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" are shown to be all of a piece with the so-called "Prophetical" poems.

In his diagnosis of the human condition Blake sees men as living estranged from one another, when man exploits and oppresses man. His aim is to set men free, and his "prophesy" is that they will set themselves free when they finally overcome class-division and class-exploitation in society.

[3] We print on pp. 291-292 two cartoons from the book, one by Tidor Kajan, the other by György Varnai.

[4] *The "Heaven" and "Hell" of William Blake*, by G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi. 336 pages, illustrated. Lawrence & Wishart, £4.75.

STOP PRESS!

See note on Chile on p. 320

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Some Thoughts on the Working Class Today

Jack Cohen

New developments in capitalism since World War Two, particularly those which have taken place in recent years, have brought about important changes in the structure of various social groupings, especially of the working class. These developments are the advance of State Monopoly Capitalism and consequently, the greatly increased intervention of the State in economic and in social affairs, the ever increasing size of big monopoly undertakings, the persistent wave of mergers and take-overs concentrating economic power in fewer and fewer hands and, particularly, the developing scientific-technological revolution, involving increased automation, the use of computers, the wide application of Research and Development techniques etc. These developments have greatly increased the role of science and of scientific and technical personnel in production, reflected amongst other things in the great growth in the number of teachers, university teachers, research workers, as well as in the number of students, most of whom enter these spheres; as well as those of administrative, clerical and other auxiliary workers. As a result, there have been significant changes in the relative "weights" of these types of "white collar" workers compared with those of industrial, manual workers, in production.

The stimulated growth of mass consumer demand in the advanced capitalist countries has increased their numbers, with the growth of "service" industries, of advertising, of financial institutions of all kinds, while the increasing role of the state in many spheres (the social services) has led to an increase in the number of people employed by the state and in local government.

Structural Changes

Some of the most general structural changes have been firstly—a great growth in the number of people working for wages and salaries *and dependent on this for their living*. This is a fact of the greatest importance in discussion of the working class today, as will be seen later.

This growth has been accompanied by the large increase in the number of women and especially of immigrant labour, drawn into production in all the capitalist countries. Its corollary has been a decline in the number of "independent", self-employed people in the professions, small business, commerce, small shopkeepers, traders and farmers.

Secondly, the traditional industries on which capitalism developed—textiles, mining, heavy engineering—have declined in importance and in the number of people they employ. In production generally the number of skilled workers of the old type is declining. The development of modern mass production methods, automation, conveyor belt systems, has meant a big increase in the number of semi-skilled and unskilled.

Thirdly, there has been a great decrease in the number of workers employed in agriculture in all capitalist countries as well as of small peasants and farmers, as mentioned previously.

The other side of the picture is a big development of new "growth" industries—e.g. aero-space, petro-chemical—as well as the expansion and modernisation of the motor-car, radio and television and other industries catering for "consumer durables".

All these developments have been the subject of much discussion and analysis, of conferences and seminars in the international Communist movement, and of important books and articles by Marxist writers.

In Britain they have been treated in a series of articles in *Marxism Today*,[1] in a preliminary discussion in the Executive Committee of the Communist Party opened by Gerry Cohen,[2] and in such books as *Capitalist Society and Modern Sociology* by H. Frankel and *New Theories of Social Revolution* by Jack Woddis.[3]

What follows is aimed primarily at stimulating discussion, which did not, unfortunately, result from the articles mentioned and to take up once again some questions raised in them, above all questions of the definition of class, and of what the category—

[1] See Alan Hunt—"The Class Structure of Britain Today", June 1970; Vic Allen—"Contemporary Capitalism and Revolutionary Change", May 1972; Sam Aaronovitch—"Perspectives of Class Struggles and Class Alliances", and Manuel Azcarate—"The New Role of Science", both in the March 1973 issue.

[2] See *Comment*, January 20th, 1971.

[3] Both published by Lawrence and Wishart.

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"the working class"—embraces in the conditions of today.

Of necessity there will be some repetition of points already made in the articles mentioned. But this cannot be avoided.

Some Facts and Figures

Alan Hunt in his article gave us (amongst other things) some very useful figures. But he wrote over three years ago, and his figures did not go beyond 1961. In addition he was concerned primarily with Britain. The figures given us by Sam Aaronovitch, writing nearly three years later, bring the analysis more closely up to date. I will try to give some more recent figures for Britain (see Table 1) and for the USA, Western Germany and France which may be of interest (Tables II, III, IV).

Table I spotlights the whole trend of development in Britain. Out of a total working population which has remained almost constant over the past decade, the number of male workers in 1971 declined by nearly a million (837,000); the number of women workers increased by 492,000; the already tiny percentage of workers employed in agriculture declined by a half, in mining by over a half, the percentage employed in financial, professional and scientific services has increased by over a half, while the wholly unemployed has increased over two and a half times.

As against this, the number of technical, administrative and clerical workers employed in all manufacturing industry increased from 23.4 per cent in 1964 to 27.4 per cent in 1971; between 1961 and 1971, the increase in the number of people employed in the Services and public administration jumped from 26 per cent to 37½ per cent; those employed in Insurance, Banking and Finance from 268,300 in 1948 to 366,800 in 1968; the teaching staff in Universities (from professors downwards) from 12,417 in 1960-61 to 33,265 in 1970-71, and the number of full and part-time University students almost doubled from 125,530 in 1960-61 to 250,474

TABLE I
EMPLOYMENT
Distribution of total working population[1]

	Great Britain			Mid-June		Thousands	
	1961	1966[2]		1969[3]		1970	1971
		(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)		
Employment structure (thousands)							
Employees in employment:							
Males	14,379	14,704		14,027		13,832	13,542
Females	7,994	8,597		8,573		8,573	8,486
Total	22,373	23,301		22,600		22,404	22,027
Employers and self-employed	1,672	1,612		1,744		1,744	1,744
Total in civilian employment	24,044	24,913		24,344		24,148	23,771
Registered wholly unemployed	255	253		483		524	687
HM Forces and women's services	474	417		380		372	368
Total working population	24,773	25,583		25,207		25,044	24,827
Industrial structure							
Percentage of total employees in employment:							
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2.6	2.0	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
Mining and quarrying	3.3	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.8
Manufacturing	39.3	38.1	38.5	38.6	38.7	39.0	38.3
of which textiles, leather, clothing and footwear	6.6	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.5	5.3	5.2
Construction	6.6	7.2	7.0	6.4	6.4	5.9	5.7
Gas, electricity and water	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7
Transport and communication	7.4	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.9	7.0	7.1
Distributive trades	12.5	12.8	12.6	12.0	12.0	11.8	11.7
Financial, professional and scientific services	11.7	13.5	13.5	15.3	16.2	16.8	17.6
Miscellaneous services (incl. catering and hotels)	8.8	9.5	9.4	9.3	8.3	8.1	8.1
Public administration	5.7	5.8	5.8	6.1	6.1	6.2	6.4

[1 2 3] Industrial reclassifications have resulted in two sets of figures being produced for each of the years 1964, 1966 and 1969. In 1966 and 1969 each series headed (a) is comparable with the previous year and the series headed (b) with the year following. More detail is given in Appendix A. The reallocations in 1964 resulted in increases of 0.1 per cent or less. (*Social Trends*, No. 3, 1972)

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TABLE II
Changes in the social structure of the active working population in France—1962-72 in percentages.

	1962	1968	1972
Working class	42.8	43.3	43.9
Employees	14.6 } 26.9	17.1 } 31.3	17.8 } 33.8
Other salaried workers	12.3 }	14.2 }	16.8 }
Army and Police	1.9	1.7	1.8
TOTAL	71.6	76.3	79.5
Non-salaried urban middle class (business people, artisans, liberal peasants), Working peasants, Director of Enterprises, Clergy	28.4		

in 1970-71 (*Social Trends No. 3, 1972*, and *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1972*).

Table II reveals a similar development in France. The figures in this table are brought to life by the following:—

> "In 1954, the active working population engaged in agriculture in France (including those working for wages and salaries) numbered 5,140,000. . . . During the course of the last 20 years the exodus of people from agriculture (those working for wages and those who were not) has amounted on average to 150,000 a year. . . .
>
> "On the other hand there has been a very important increase in the numbers of new salary earners, especially of engineers,[4] technicians and managerial personnel, of teachers and research workers. . . . According to the first breakdown of the 1968 Census, engineers, technicians and managerial personnel combined amount to approximately 2 million people, practically 10 per cent of the active working population . . . in certain branches they already amount to more than a quarter of the workers employed . . . 26 per cent in chemicals, 30 per cent in electricity, 50 per cent in electronics, 60 per cent in petroleum, more than three-quarters in nuclear power. . . .
>
> "The proportion of skilled workers in relation to the total number of wage workers has declined by 6.5 per cent from 22.69 per cent in 1953 to 16.5 per cent in 1968. During these 15 years the total number of skilled workers declined by 200,000.
>
> "On the other hand the number of semi-skilled and unskilled workers increased during the same period from 23 per cent to 27 per cent. The semi-skilled alone increased by 850,000 during this period. . . ."[5]
>
> "While some of the traditional industries are stagnating or declining—mining by 27 per cent, textiles by 25 per cent, food and provisions by 16 per cent . . . there was a rapid increase—60 per cent between 1962 and 1968—in the number of technicians who now number 360,000, 100,000 industrial designers, 40,000 production engineers. Also of employees and office workers of all kinds who now number over 3½ million."[6]

The same story can be told of other capitalist countries—Western Germany and, especially, the USA (see Tables III and IV).

The total working force has increased but, within it, the number of "white collar" workers has increased very significantly, while those of industrial manual workers has declined.

[4] Engineers here is used to denote qualified production engineers.

[5] *Le Capitalisme Monopoliste d'Etat*, pp. 227-228 and 231-232 Editions, Sociales, Paris.

[6] Claude Quin, *Economie et Politique*, June 1973.

TABLE III
Distribution of the Labour Force in Federal Germany (in '000s)*

Year	Workers	Proportion of all wage and salary earners	Employees	Proportion of all wage and salary earners	Officials	Proportion of all salary earners
1950	11,229	71.8%	3,524	22.5%	879	5.6%
1969	12,403	58.0%	7,540	35.4%	1,412	6.6%

* Quoted in Heinz Jung in "Das Argument" from a number of West German sources.

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TABLE IV
Distribution of the Labour Force in the USA (in '000s)*

	1950	1972
Total Working Population	59,668	80,627
White Collar Workers	22,373	38,892
of which		
Professional & Technical Workers	4,490	11,583
Managers and Administrative (except farm)	6,429	7,810
Clerical Workers	7,632	41,191
Blue Collar Workers	23,373	27,774
of which		
Operatives	12,146	13,170
Service Workers	6,535	11,066
Farm Workers	7,408	2,926

Source: Statistical Abstract of US 1972. Table 266, p. 230.
* This is not a complete breakdown of the distribution of the Labour Force in all branches. Only the grouping level relevant to this discussion are included.

Percentage of White Collar Workers in White Collar jobs

1957	44.2%
1971	50.6%

Percentage of Negro and other workers in White Collar jobs

1957	12.8%
1971	29.1%

Germany and the USA

In Germany as a whole, for example, the total labour force in 1882 numbered 17,005,000 of which the industrial workers accounted for 57.4 per cent, employees and officials 6.1 per cent (3 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively). In 1969, in Federal Germany alone, the labour force amounted to 26,153,000 of which industrial workers made up 47.4 per cent while the employees and officials increased to 34.2 per cent (28.8 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively). Or, put another way, if 1950 is taken as the index year for Federal Germany, at 100, by 1969 while the total number of wage and salary earners would have gone up by 34.5 per cent i.e. given the figure 134.5, industrial workers would only have gone up to 110.5, but employees would have gone up to 213.9 and officials to 160.6.[7] In 1950 7.2 per cent of all gainfully employed people in Federal Germany were employed in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. By 1968 the figure had declined to 1.4 per cent.

This whole process has developed more rapidly and completely in the USA than in any other capitalist country in the world. According to a speech made by Mr. L. Greenberg, Chief Statistician of the US Department of Labour at the Third Conference on Automation organised by I.G. Metall in March, 1968, the number of "white collar" workers had equalled those of "blue collar" workers as early as 1955, surpassed them by 21 per cent by 1965 and was estimated to exceed them by 40 per cent by 1970.[8] (See table IV.) In Federal Germany, it is calculated that the number of "white collar" workers will equal those of "blue collar" workers by 1980. (Statement made at the 6th Congress of "white collar" Unions affiliated to the Federal German TUC).[9]

> "The United States, the technologically most advanced State, has become the first country where more people are employed in the non-productive spheres than in the productive ones. It is estimated that by 1975, 62 per cent of all factory and office workers will be engaged in these spheres."[10]

All these structural changes in the working class pose important problems. How do we define the working class today? Does its present composition, marked as it is by the very significant growth of non-manual as compared to manual workers and the perspective, already a fact in the United States, that they will soon greatly exceed them in other capitalist countries, invalidate the principle—central to all Marxist-Leninist thinking—of the leading role of

[7] Heinz Jung, *Das Argument*. December, 1970.

[8] Heinz Jung, *Ibid.*

[9] Heinz Jung, *Ibid.*

[10] Quoted from the *Manpower Report to the President 1968*, by Nicholai Gausner, in *The Scientific and Technological Revolution*, p. 193, Progress Publishers.

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the working class in the Socialist Revolution? What political conclusions can be drawn from these developments in the realms of immediate tactics and long-term strategy?

What do we mean by Class?

It would perhaps be best to preface attempts to answer these questions by discussing what we mean by "class". This is important not only for our general purpose, but because a number of bourgeois sociologists have sought to conjure any meaningful concept of class which has any relationship to class struggle and to defining the real *class* system of capitalist exploitation, out of existence.

Marx did not leave us his own, fully elaborated definition of social class although almost everything he wrote had to do with class and class struggle, and he devoted the whole of his life to advancing the struggle and the victory of the working-class.

He had intended to deal with classes and the very last chapter of Volume III of *Capital* entitled "The Classes" is evidence of this. But the manuscript breaks off after a mere one and a half printed pages.

There are occasional and fragmentary references and "off the cuff" definitions in *The 18th Brumaire* and in the *Critique of Political Economy*, made when he is really discussing other things.

Nevertheless, we get valuable pointers to our approach to class from these fragments.

The chapter in *Capital* mentioned contains (in part) the following:

> "The owners of mere labour power, the owners of Capital and the landlords whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent form the three great classes of modern society resting on the Capitalist mode of production. . . .
>
> "In England modern society is indisputably developed most highly and classically in its economic structure. *Nevertheless the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form even there. Middle and transition stages obliterate even here, all definite boundaries. . .* "
>
> The first question to be answered is this: what constitutes a class? And this follows naturally from another question, namely, what constitutes wage labourers, capitalists and landlords into these three great social classes . . .?
>
> At first glance it might seem that the identity of their revenues and their sources of revenue does that. . . .
>
> *However, from this point of view, physicians and officials would also form two classes* for they form two distinct social groups and the revenues of their members flow from the same common source. *The same could also be true of the infinite dissipation of interests and positions created by the social division of labour among labourers, capitalists and landlords.*[11] (My italics J.C.)

[11] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. III.

Alas, we shall never know what Marx's conclusions from a second and deeper "glance" would have been!

In the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (". . . in truth a work of genius!" Engels), a superb account and analysis of class forces in contradiction and conflict, Marx, discussing the situation and plight of the peasant small-holders in the light of Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'etat* of December 2, 1851, writes *en-passant*:—

> "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate *their mode of life, their interests and their culture* from those of other classes *and put them in a hostile position to the latter*, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants *and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond, no political organisation* among them, they do not form a class. They are consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name . . ."[12] (My italics J.C.).

In the same work Marx defined the petty bourgeoisie as a *transition class* "in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously mutually blunted".[13]

Finally, in the *Critique of Political Economy*,[14] Marx writes:—

> "Population is an abstraction if, for instance, one disregards the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn remain empty terms if one does not know the factors on which they depend, e.g. wage labour, capital and so on. These pre-suppose exchange, the division of labour, prices etc.," (My italics J.C.).

A Concrete Approach

In these statements Marx emphasises the need for a *concrete* approach to social class—in both economic and political terms. Concrete in the economic sense by reference to the place they occupy in the whole productive process ("the factors on which they (classes) depend", owners of labour power, capital, land). On the other hand the need to avoid crude economic criteria—"identity" and "source" of revenues (incomes).

Above all he emphasises the *political* requisites for a class. It is not enough that it stands "in a hostile position" to another class. It must fight for its class interests and become a class "for itself".

Finally, rigidity, neat purity of classification, must be avoided. When he was writing, and even more so today, ". . . middle and transition stages obliterate . . . all definite boundaries".

Before turning to the way Lenin and, following

[12] Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 303.
[13] Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 252.
[14] Lawrence and Wishart, p. 205.

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him, more immediately contemporary Marxists approach social class, I should like to quote two examples of a trend becoming increasingly dominant in bourgeois sociology. There are others who share with the writers to be quoted, a rejection of the Marxist view of classes as objective social realities, and seek to bury them in all kinds of subtle and not so subtle ways.

Thus the American writer, R. Centers, says:—

> "Classes are psycho-social groupings something that is essentially subjective in character dependent on class consciousness (i.e. a feeling of group membership) . . . class as distinguished from stratum, can well be regarded as a *psychological* phenomenon in the fullest sense of the term. That is, a man's class is part of his ego, *a feeling on his part of belongingness* to something, an *identification* with something larger than himself."[15]

In an article in *New Society* (October 19, 1972) entitled "Class", the author, Gavin Mackenzie, after presenting a brief account of Marx's ideas of class and comparing them with those of Max Weber, outlines the views of "contemporary (bourgeois, J.C.) analysis of social class", which would appear to take as its starting point the views which Marx attacked in his *Capital* fragment, and which in essence repeat Centers' views:—

> ". . . position in the *division of labour* (Mackenzie's emphasis) represents the crucial determinant of access to scarce resources."
>
> "It is this emphasis on division of labour that is the distinguishing feature of contemporary social analysis. . . . This merely asserts that, in general, the position of different degrees of skill gives groups (classes) different degrees of power in the market.
>
> "The division of labour is also a crucial determinant of class situation via the mechanism of the work situation. Every individual by virtue of a given location in the division of labour is precipitated into a particular set of relationships with other individuals, a particular set of work tasks a particular authority system. . . . These various components of the work situation exert a crucial influence on the way the individual behaves and feels on and off the job."

This definition would, presumably, make separate classes of Marx's classification of the groupings which made up "The Society of December 10th" (since each group had a special "work situation")—Louis Bonaparte's private army of scoundrels, a brutal combination of claque and strong-arm men, operating both to boost Louis Bonaparte and to "deal with" those who opposed him:—

> "Alongside decayed roués . . . of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeois were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzorani*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maqueraux* (procurers), brothelkeepers, porters, literati, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife-grinders, tinkers, beggars."[16]

Class for the two writers quoted above and for their supporters, is something internal to people, primarily "a feeling". For Lenin and all other Marxists class is a category existing in the real social world to which people belong, whether they are conscious of it or not.

Lenin on Class

Following Marx's whole approach and elaborating a comprehensive definition of class is Lenin's famous statement in "A Great Beginning",[17] also made *en-passant*, for he was really dealing with the significance of "Communist Saturdays":

> "Classes are large groups of people, differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most places fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour and, consequently, by the dimensions of the social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people, one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy."

This definition, the accepted basis of all communist approaches to class, is many sided, embracing a number of different features of class.

Recent Marxist writing on class emphasises the need to recognise this, to avoid a purely economic approach to class and especially to avoid "pure", rigid classifications, in short to look at class in a dialectical way.

Thus the Soviet writer, W. S. Semyonov, in his book *Capitalism and Class*,[18] writes:—

> "Class differences embrace the most multiform sides of the life of large social groups of people—economic, social, political, intellectual, and in the areas of ordinary life. Marxism-Leninism has never asserted that classes are 'only', 'purely, or 'exclusively' economic phenomena. It fought and will always continue to fight against the 'one-sided', 'purely economic' interpretation of social phenomena and of social classes which are attributed to it."

[15] R. Centers, "The Psychology of Social Classes", quoted in H. Frankel, "Capitalist Society and Modern Sociology", pp. 149-150.

[16] Karl Marx *18th Brumaire*, Marx-Engels *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 257.

[17] Lenin *Selected Works*, 1 Volume edition, p. 486, Lawrence and Wishart.

[18] German translation, Akademie Verlag Berlin, p. 39.

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The West German Marxist writer—Heinz Jung—has some interesting things to say along the same lines. After drawing attention to the changes in Lenin's definition of classes from the places groups occupy in "the system of *social production*" at the beginning, to those they occupy in "the system of *social economy*" at the end, in support of his views, he writes:—

> "The structure of classes and social strata is not identical with their total reality. Under certain circumstances classes are the subjects of history, in whose actions the conflict and contradictions of society become manifest. They are, in a certain sense, comparable to living organisms. . . ."
>
> "In the period prior to 1966-67, a somewhat one-sided conception of the socio-economic foundation of classes, especially the property relations, prevailed among West German Marxists. As a consequence, the basis for classes was frequently and almost exclusively regarded as being situated in the first place, in the juridically established property relations in the means of production. As a result, only the basic classes were derived from the prevailing production relations, the subsidiary classes being regarded as relics of the old modes of production. The 'new' intermediate strata were, as a consequence, accorded insufficient attention. . . ."
>
> "Although as a theoretical principle, the Marxist theory of class starts from the primacy, in the last analysis, of the sphere of material production and the social structures which arise in it for the class structure of society, this cannot mean that classes and social strata can be derived mechanically . . . from their position in production. . . ."
>
> "It would be a serious misunderstanding if classes are directly identified with production relations and, as a result, political economy and class theory are equated with one another. . . . Mistakes arising from over-emphasis of the structural aspect occur less frequently if the real movement of classes, the development of their interests, ideology, consciousness and organisation, are taken into account in the development of class structure."[19]

What is the Working Class?

Bearing these observations in mind we can now attempt to define the working-class, understanding that we are dealing with the *working-class as it exists today*, a class which it has been correctly (in my opinion) argued now includes considerable sections of people who would not previously have been included, people belonging to the so-called intermediate strata, scientific, technical, "service", "white-collar", workers of various kinds.

There has been considerable discussion and argument about this in the communist movement and different definitions stress different aspects.

We can best start with the comprehensive statement given by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*:—

> "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. Capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working-class, developed—a class of labourers who live only as long as they find work, and find work only as long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal are a commodity like every other article of commerce. . . ."

The ideas in this extract form a common unifying element in the different definitions that follow. These seek to embrace the new developments in capitalism, the new role of scientists and technical workers in production and of other intermediate sections. For what Marx and Engels say about the working-class in the *Manifesto* applies equally to them. *This is, their total dependence on work for wages or salaries arising out of the fact that they own no means of production of their own on which they can live. That their labour power, as a consequence, is a commodity no matter how specialised it may be.*

There are, however, different emphases and nuances. One of the major ones concerns the relation of people to the production of surplus value, which is regarded by some as an essential criterion for defining the working-class.

This is particularly true of the French Communist Party and was voiced with great emphasis by Etienne Fajon in his contribution at the 19th Congress of the French Communist Party (1970) when he was replying to theories which had been advanced by Roger Garaudy.

Developing this approach further, the French Communist Party, in its recently published study of State Monopoly Capitalism, states:—

> "Even if it is not always clearly understood, the working class in our epoch is made up of the manual workers, the producers of surplus value, and the constantly increasing numbers of those who contribute to the production of surplus value by their mental labour or carry out various auxiliary operations. Consequently, the working class comprises not only those who work on the land, in the pits, factories and the docks—the core of the working class—but also all those working for wages or salaries who take part directly in the preparation and setting in motion, the operation of material production, and, by this token are producers of surplus value. . . .
>
> "*However complex the nature of this activity (mental or manual labour) or the sector (public or private) where this activity is carried out, membership of the working class derives essentially from three facts: non-possession of any means of production, production of commodities, non-participation in the appropriation of surplus value. . . . These guidelines must not be understood in a mechanical way. . . .*

[19] *Klassen und Sozialstruktur der BRD 1950-1970*, Frankfurt, Part I, pp. 4, 5 and 6.

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They will not define every worker in the most precise fashion but they emphasise that the decisive criterion for defining the working class is the creation of surplus value in the sphere of material production . . . the working class is the sole producer of surplus value."[20]

While accepting much of this definition I query other parts of it and will return to this later.

Other Definitions

Sam Aaronovitch broadens the definition and makes it more comprehensive:—

> "Economically, I accept the definition of the working class as constituting all who depend for their livelihood on the sale of their labour power, whether physical or mental (since they do not own the means of production) and who also 'have no directing voice in determining the processes of production or the volume of output, who are subjected to the direction of the employer—the owner of the means of production—or his agents—all such wage earners are members of the working class' (J. M. Budish—*The Changing Structure of the US Working Class*). This would apply to workers in the field of circulation as well as production and who are employed by the state as well as in privately owned firms."[21]

While I find this definition much more satisfactory I believe that it needs expansion and will explain why later.

Heinz Jung, after discussing Marx's concept of productive and unproductive workers declares that in his view, definition of the working class cannot base itself on reference to these categories.

Since Marx emphasises again and again that productive labour is that labour alone which produces surplus value, there would seem to be some divergence of view between him and the French comrades.

He writes:—

> "A concise definition of the working class in Federal Germany could be: 'The working class in the Federal German Republic includes all those in employment and their dependents, who own no means of production of their own and whose exclusive or principal source of income is the sale of their labour power for wages or salaries, whose surplus labour is appropriated either by individual capitalists, by groups of capitalists collectively or by the capitalist state and is the direct or indirect source of capitalist profit; whose social existence is marked by insecurity and who, in view of the organisation of labour on the basis of function and qualifications (in any given sphere) are in subordinate or intermediate positions that is, positions in which they are mainly carrying out instructions, and whose social advance into the opposing class, the bourgeoisie, is (as a relevant process) impossible and does not take place'."[22]

This definition differs somewhat from an almost identical one he made three years previously in the article in *Das Argument* from which I have quoted so much. This latter definition is immediately followed by this:—

> "In line with the above definition, the following could be counted as belonging to the working class—the workers in material production and in other social spheres, the lower and the greater part of the intermediate sections of employees (and officials) in the productive and non-productive branches including those in the private and public service sectors (in which connection the social classification of those employed in the repressive organisations of the state—armed forces, police, justice—constitutes a special problem requiring further discussion."

This last point is of great importance.

The Role of Managers

Returning to the French definition, the emphasis on the production of surplus value as the decisive criterion (*critère determinant*) of the working class, seems to me to be too comprehensive. It does not differentiate sufficiently between different kinds of managerial and technical personnel. For the formula in this definition (those who engage in "the preparation and setting in motion of material production") could embrace the top managerial groups whose role in the production process and relationship with the workers excludes them in my opinion from being regarded as members of the working class. It would also seem to conflict with a number of statements by Marx, which includes amongst those who produce surplus value managers and engineers, many of whom, in their general functions, operate as the direct instruments of capitalist exploitation. In addition it leaves out of account all those who are involved in the realisation process of surplus value.

For example, Part 1 of *Theories of Surplus Value* is, in the main, devoted to a discussion of the views of Adam Smith, Ricardo, the Physiocrats and others on productive and unproductive labour. Again and again (as stated previously) Marx emphasises that productive labour is that which produces surplus value and that a productive worker is one who participates in doing this. But, he adds:—

> "Included in these productive workers, of course, are those who contribute in one way or another to the production of the commodity, from the actual operative to the manager or engineer (as distinct from the capitalist)."

[20] *Le Capitalisme Monopoliste D'Etat*, tome I, pp. 218-219.

[21] Sam Aaronovitch, *Marxism Today*, March, 1973.

[22] Heinz Jung, *op cit*, p. 133.

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This is the basis for Marx's concept of the "collective labourer"—the total work force which must be regarded as the joint producers of commodities and therefore of surplus value.

Again, referring to the "labour of management or supervision" as productive labour, i.e., as productive of surplus value, Marx writes:—

> "The labour of supervision and management is naturally required wherever the direct process of production assumes the form of a direct social process, and not as the isolated labour of individual producers. However, it has a double nature. On the one hand, all labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires a *commanding will* to co-ordinate and unify the process . . . this is a *productive* job which has to be performed in every combined mode of production."[23] (My italics J.C.)

One could argue that since managers are, on the whole, salaried employees and, therefore, within the definition given by Marx in the *Manifesto*, and that since the first part of the French definition includes in the working class, those "who prepare and set in motion" material production, there is no contradiction with the second statement that "the working class is the sole producer of surplus value".

No-one would, of course, deny that the working class, in the wide sense in which it is now defined, is *the* producer of surplus value but merely to leave it at this is to overlook the complexity of class relations, the dual, contradictory role of some sections of the "new" working class.

Marx draws attention to this aspect:—

> "One part of the labour of superintendence merely arises from the *antagonistic contradiction* between capital and labour, from the antagonistic character of capitalist production. . . ."[24] (My italics J C.)

As stated, some of the sections we are discussing exercise managerial functions in the production process. The higher echelons of these categories cannot be regarded as members of the working class, for, although they depend on the sale of their labour power for their existence like workers, they function directly on behalf of the capitalist class in the production process and embody their aims and interests. They must therefore be excluded from our definition—a point made by both Alan Hunt and by Heinz Jung. Similar considerations obviously apply to the higher ranks of the army and the police, to the whole of the judiciary and the top ranks of other parts of the State apparatus.

[23] Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 383.
[24] Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part III, p. 505.

State Employees

As for the middle and lower ranks of these forces, the position is fairly clear though in some respects complicated. The rank and file and many of the middling ranks of the repressive and other organs of the State come from working class backgrounds in their overwhelming majority. They live on the wages and salaries they receive. They are "unproductive" workers in every Marxist sense of the term, since they produce no value and their incomes derive from the revenues acquired by State or municipalities from taxes, and not like that of the productive workers from variable capital.

In practice, their task is to maintain the capitalist system of exploitation, to keep the production of surplus value going. Hence they may be said to be involved in an indirect but nevertheless essential fashion, in the realisation of the surplus value on which the whole system rests. Nevertheless, their class background, their origin, the conditions of their lives and work, puts them squarely in the ranks of the working class. This is the basis for the idea that big sections of these people can be neutralised and others won over to the cause of the working class, especially at decisive moments.

All the definitions of the working class so far given, agree in many ways. They all stress as decisive features the lack of ownership of the means of production, the need to sell labour power for wages and/or salaries, in order to live, this being the essential basis of the exploitation of the working class under capitalism.

A Common Defect

But they all seem to me to suffer from a similar defect. They all emphasise the general *economic* features of the working class but fail to go beyond this. (Even, surprisingly, those of Heinz Jung who, in his other quoted statements expresses the strongest opposition to such an approach. Sam Aaronovitch, it is true, qualifies his own definition by prefacing it with the word "Economically", and later on in his article discusses wider aspects, but does not include them in any additional definitions).

While these economic features are of the greatest importance and need to be emphasised and understood, a class, especially the working class in capitalist society, is not only an economic category. It is, by definition, a decisive, dynamic factor, engaged in class struggle almost from the moment it comes into existence. It is the "grave-digger" of Capitalism (*Manifesto*) and its immediate and ultimate importance consists precisely in this. Thus what is really important about the working class is *what it does*, what it is compelled to do, as a result of *what it is*, i.e. in view of its very economic and social position in capitalist society. This aspect must be emphasised in any definition of the working class if

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we wish it to express, above all, the revolutionary, political role the working class is called on to play. This is the aspect Marx emphasised in his references to the small-holding peasants in the quotation given above.

My own definition of the working class would base itself on that given by Sam Aaronovitch:—

> ". . . the working class as constituting all those who depend for their livelihood on the sale of their labour power, whether physical or mental (since they do not own the means of production) and who also have 'no directing voice in determining the processes of production of the volume of output', who are subjected to the direction of the employer—the owner of the means of production or his agents."

But I would add:—

> "whose interests are therefore absolutely opposed to those of the owners of the means of production, the capitalists, and who are therefore driven to struggle continually in defence of their immediate interests and for the long term overthrow of the capitalist system of exploitation."

It is this aspect of the working class which, in my view, is, in the last analysis, the most important one and must govern our approach to the new sections which we now accept as belonging to the working class, and to some of the problems which this poses.

Some Problems

On the one hand, the forces of the working class have grown numerically as the result of the processes described in the beginning of this article. They have also grown in other ways. The conditions of life and work of industrial and white collar workers are approximating more and more. On the one hand there has been an advance in the general level of education and a certain expansion in its availability. On the other hand, there is uncertainty of employment, experience of sudden dismissals, the erosion of certain skills by the introduction of certain machines in offices, a certain loss of "white collar status", expressed in the point made in Heinz Jung's statement quoted above, namely the downgrading of many white collar jobs to ones consisting merely of carrying out other people's instructions. Further there is the more equal level of incomes, indeed, in many cases the reversal of previous income "differentials" as between "white collar" and industrial workers in favour of the latter, problems of "making ends meet" in face of low starting salaries (especially of teachers), fixed incomes in conditions of wildly escalating inflation, mortgage burdens etc.

But above all, more and more of these sections are feeling the need for trade union organisation, are sharing the experience of trade union struggle, of the picket line, of confrontation with the police, in short, are being drawn into the Labour movement along with other and older sections of the working class.

But these very developments mean that the working class itself is becoming more heterogeneous and differentiated. The new sections, while they frequently bring with them a refreshing lack of inhibition with regard to the forms of struggle, nevertheless have deeply rooted petit-bourgeois ideas especially with regard to politics, to socialism and to the struggle to achieve it. Indeed, some continental Marxist writers speak of parts of these sections as forming a new basis for the "Labour aristocracy". Not all the people in these sections by any means, are directly involved in production, in daily contact with and common struggle alongside, the "big battalions" of the industrial working class. Many are employed in "service", advertising and in other parasitical industries.

The need above all, while recognising this, is to avoid sectarianism and to intensify political activity and explanation amongst them.

In Britain at this moment it involves a most intensive and persistent struggle to unite all forces of the working class in the fight against the Tory Government and to defeat the Right Wing in the Labour Party. Only a Labour movement seen to be fighting for a genuine working class policy in face of the all round attacks being made by the Tory Government on the overwhelming majority of the people, can win the greater part of these sections for progressive, political struggle.

Failure to do this means handing over important sections of the "new" working class to the Liberals or even to Enoch Powell.

A political task of the greatest importance is therefore the development of a wide explanatory campaign especially among these sections, of our genuinely socialist alternative and, in so doing, exposing the phoney pretensions of the Liberals to being "the Radical, political alternative" as well as the dangers and reactionary essence of Powellite policies. This should be accompanied by every effort to involve Liberals and Liberal organisations in the many campaigns now being waged by different sections of the people against one or other of the reactionary home and foreign policies of the Government.

As for the future, the developments we have been discussing will continue, whether more or less rapidly is not decisive. The scientific, technological revolution cannot be stopped in its tracks. And its impact, along with that of developing state monopoly capitalism, will likewise result in accelerating structural changes in the working class.

Will the basic core of the working class—the traditional, militant sources of working class leadership and struggle—disappear? I do not think

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so since the heirs to a long tradition of militant trade unionism are precisely those now deeply rooted in the most modern, developed branches of industry and have their roots in the biggest enterprises (AUEW, TGWU). Modern industrial techniques increasingly demand greater technical knowledge from manual workers and, as already stated above, likewise approximate the conditions of life of many of the technical workers to that of the manual workers. Here is the basis for the development of a new type of producer of surplus value, the technically skilled workers, the technical workers now more directly involved, in greater numbers, in material production than ever before. This means an expansion and strengthening of the core of the working class and not its diminution.

Further, in Britain, where we enjoy the great advantage of having a single trade union federation, the TUC, the greater part of the white-collar unions now developing have close links with it. And in the TUC, the traditional core of the organised industrial working class exercises a growing, dominating influence.

The new developments, therefore, are to be welcomed. They provide important new forces, which under the leadership of the traditional core of the working class and its Communist Party, can greatly strengthen the fight for Socialism.

(*Discussion contributions of up to 2,000 words on this article are welcome. We hope to publish extracts from an article of some Soviet economists on this subject shortly.*)

Review Article:

Grundrisse

Maurice Dobb

The *Grundrisse*, which is the name given to seven Notebooks of Marx, composed in 1857-8, has been the subject of much comment and discussion in Marxist circles, internationally, in recent years; it has also become the hunting-ground for those seeking textual support for this or that interpretation favoured by various leftist groups. For some time these Notebooks were lost from view; and were only published in full (in German) after the Second World War (although a limited edition was published in Moscow in two volumes in 1939 and 1941). The welcome publication in paperback by Penguin of the work in an English translation by Martin Nicolaus* is based on the 1953 edition by Dietz Verlag in Berlin.

The Background

In his informative, thoughtful and erudite 50-page Foreword the translator rightly emphasises that these seven notebooks were "rough-drafted by Marx, chiefly for purposes of self-clarification". At the same time "he considered these workbooks to contain the first scientific elaboration of the theoretical foundations of communism", and they "stand as the only outline of Marx's full political economic project" and "display the key elements in Marx's development and overthrow of the Hegelian philosophy". Hence "they cast a fresh light on the inner logic of Capital". Its character as a 'rough draft' is noticeable to a reader "in the form . . . of missing elements of grammar, of difficult, sometimes awkward, obscure and even altogether inaccurate formulations, endless sentences and paragraphs, irritating digressions and reiterations, etc.," naturally, this makes it difficult reading at first sight; "it is a text which proclaims on nearly every page its unripeness for print". "Roughness and difficulty are the overriding qualities. It is a demanding text to read and a hazardous one to quote, since the context, the grammar and the very vocabulary raise doubts as to what Marx 'really' meant in a given passage." An added difficulty is the preponderance in it of Hegelian terminology—and not merely terminology, but of concepts too, since Marx is at this stage still bound up with and grappling with Hegel's methodology, in the course of "settling accounts" with it. Nonetheless it will doubtless prove a hunting-ground for mystifiers and quotation-mongers.

* The Pelican Marx Library, K. Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*; trans. with a Foreword by Martin Nicolaus, Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, pp. 893, £1.00.

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The Foreword goes on to point out that the immediate historical background of these notes was the triumph of reaction following the decline of the revolutionary wave of 1848-50 and the onset of the economic crisis of 1857. After the events of July 1850 in Paris Marx and Engels "advanced the thesis that revolution had become impossible in the immediately foreseeable future, and that the tasks of the League of Communists must be reset accordingly to give first priority to the work of education, study and development of revolutionary theory": a view which "fell like cold water on the flames of exile fantasy", and which won only a small majority in the League's London Central Committee (the League itself was dissolved in 1852).

Marx's Mind at Work

This volume begins with a 20 page 'Introduction' about the general relations of Production, Consumption, Distribution and Circulation or Exchange that is already familiar to us since it has appeared in conjunction with English versions of the *Critique of Political Economy* of 1859 (both the original N. I. Stone edition of 1904 *and* the recent Lawrence and Wishart edition, in a new translation, of 1971). "A fragmentary sketch" only, it was not intended for publication, at any rate, in that form. According to a note on the manuscript, it was "written between the end of August and the middle of September 1857": that is, at the start of the period when the bulk of the *Grundrisse* was being written. The *Grundrisse* proper consists of two enormous chapters, entitled respectively The Chapter on Money, much the shorter of the two, and The Chapter on Capital (at the end there is a short note on Bastiat and Carey, two secondary economists of the period, composed after reading the 1851 edition in French of the former's *Economic Harmonies*, and also a fragment on Value which breaks off in the middle of a sentence). Like most of the subsequent *Critique*, it was concerned essentially with the sphere of commodity-circulation or exchange. What Marx is doing here is to wrestle in his own mind and clarify his own ideas in relation to problems as already posed by previous economists about monetary exchange and exchange-value.

As we have said, it consists of notebooks in which Marx was seeking, not to write at that stage a treatise, but to develop and clarify his own ideas. Hence he starts from the level or standpoint of his predecessors, whom he is seeking to criticise and from whom he is trying to break free, while grasping what is of positive value in their posing of problems. (The Foreword even suggests that "as Marx himself notes, the manner of presentation suffers from idealist defects"). This serves to explain both the length and sometimes obscurity of what he here writes. The point to appreciate, however, is that these personal notebooks enable us to see the critical mind of the writer *at work*, and hence to gain a new dimension of appreciation and comprehension of his later and more finished work, such as *Capital* (although even here, in the case of Vols. II and III, we have nothing more complete than preliminary drafts edited by Engels after his death). As the Nicolaus-Foreword again puts it: "The *Grundrisse* is the record of Marx's mind at work, grappling with fundamental problems of theory. This is the manuscript's most valuable distinguishing characteristic. . . . The beauty of first drafts generally and of this one in particular is that one may see something of *how* the author *worked out* in his mind the ideas which later take the form of ready-made, polished, quotable conclusions."

Those who are acquainted with Marx's more mature work will particularly notice that in the *Grundrisse* he commonly uses the term 'labour' with reference to exchange between worker and capitalist (this in common with previous economists), and is only *beginning* to arrive at the distinction between labour and the historically created commodity labour power to which he later attaches so much importance. Again, he generally operates with the traditional distinction between fixed and circulating capital, and only rarely with that between constant and variable on which so much in *Capital* turns.

Circulation or Exchange

Why then, is he so concerned here with Circulation or Exchange, instead of dealing primarily with Production as readers of *Capital* might expect him to do? In brief, because he senses that here lies the source of most of the illusions latent in bourgeois political economy—illusions which consciously or unconsciously play the social role of concealing exploitation and both the fact and the source of surplus-value as characteristic feature of bourgeois economy, or the capitalist mode of production. Even Ricardo, of whom he here speaks as "the economist *par excellence* of production", and who upheld the view that value is proportional to labour embodied in the product, saw things, he thought, too much in terms of pure exchange and failed to distinguish sufficiently the two categories of value and exchange-value. In the process of circulation everything had the semblance of an exchange of *equivalents*: buyers and sellers freely contracted to barter what they had available, in comparative abundance, for something of which they had less or which they liked better (in terms of use-value) and the competition of numerous exchanges sufficed to ensure that no exchanger, at least 'on the average' or in 'the long run', could utilise special circumstances or bargaining agility to tilt the balance to his advantage. If therefore, profit or surplus were to be made out of trade, this could only be due—apart from its being

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in payment for some special favour or service supplied by the seller to the buyer, or conversely—to the absence of competition or to some limitation on 'free' trading. Thus the so-called 'Ricardian Socialists' like Hodgskin and William Thompson attributed profit on capital to "unequal exchanges" or superior bargaining power. But "surplus value (is) not explicable by exchange".

Exchange through the mediation of money as 'general equivalent' is the highest and most developed form of 'free' exchange. "It is in the character of the money relation . . . that all inherent contradictions of bourgeois society appear extinguished in money relations as conceived in a simple form; and bourgeois democracy even more than the bourgeois economists takes refuge in this aspect . . . in order to construct apologetics for the existing economic relations" (p. 240). It follows that "in so far as the commodity or labour is conceived of only as exchange value, and the relation in which the various commodities are brought into connection with one another, as their equation, then the individuals, the subjects between whom this process goes on, are simply and only conceived of as exchangers. . . . There is absolutely no distinction between them, and this is the economic character, the aspect in which they stand towards one another in the exchange-relation. . . . As subjects of exchange, their relation is therefore that of *equality*. It is impossible to find any trace of distinction, not to speak of contradiction between them; not even a difference" (241).

Again, "in present bourgeois society as a whole, this positing of prices and their circulation etc., appears as the surface process, beneath which, however, in the depths, entirely different processes go on, in which this apparent individual equality and liberty disappear" (247).

To confine economics to the sphere of circulation is, of course, what 'modern' economics since Marx's day has increasingly done—to make it into a pure theory of prices (in modern *parlance* an analysis of general price-equilibrium), abstracted from all social and institutional factors (e.g. property institutions) underlying and moulding conditions of exchange (if only through their effect on consumers' behaviour and 'effective demand'). In a highly fashionable formulation of the pre-war decade (by Lord Robbins) economics becomes formalised as simply the science, or analysis, of scarcity-relations—a study of "the adaptation of scarce means to given ends".

Chapter on Money

An explanation which some readers may find helpful in approaching the first hundred pages about money is that, in addition to his preoccupation with primitive attempts to explain the origin and nature of profit, Marx was concerned to combat attempts of the contemporary Proudhonist school in France to substitute currency-schemes and credit-reforms (so-called labour-money, free credit *via* Mutual Credit Banks and the like) for a socialist solution. All this had a very popular appeal, especially in *petit-bourgeois* circles, and a radical flavour. The Chapter on Money, for example, starts with a detailed examination of a proposal for banking reform by a follower of Proudhon called Darimon (parts of which are not without an echo, perhaps, in modern monetary controversies?). This involves a detailed technical discussion of the basis of bank-credit, the relation between metallic reserves and bank holdings of securities, changes in discount-rates etc. (on such questions Marx was always extraordinarily thorough). In the course of this he poses "the fundamental question" as: "Can the existing relations of production and the relations of distribution which correspond to them be revolutionised by a change in the instrument of circulation, in the organisation of circulation? Further question: Can such a transformation of circulation be undertaken without touching the existing relations of production and the social relations which rest on them?" Free-credit proposals like those of Darimon he aptly characterises as: "Instead of the workers *taking* the capitalists' capital, the capitalists are supposed to be compelled to *give* it to them." This is simple and direct enough, shorn as it is of mystifying abstractions. There are later some interesting (if preliminary and as yet undeveloped) references to the relation of market price to value ("the value of commodities as determined by labour time is only their average value") and of market price to supply and demand ("supply and demand constantly determine the prices of production; never balance, or only coincidentally; but the cost of production, for its part, determines the oscillations of supply and demand"). This is in the course of examining Proudhon's utopian idea of a money based on labour-time—and, be it noted, here it *is* appropriate to deal with questions raised by Proudhon's proposals within the sphere of circulation. ("Because price is not equal to value, therefore the value-determining element—labour-time—cannot be the element in which prices are expressed. . . . Because labour-time as the measure of value exists only as an ideal, it cannot serve as the matter of price-comparisons.")

Subsequently it leads on to discussion of the nature of commodities and of money as "the general commodity" followed by a digression (somewhat in the manner of Adam Smith?) into an erudite history of money and of fluctuations in the relative prices of the previous metals. Money is primarily a commodity in so far as it is engaged in the exchange process. It also serves as a measure or

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standard. But it can, in addition, have "an independent existence outside circulation; it has stepped outside it", when it functions as a treasure or a hoard, being desired for its own sake and not merely as a means of acquiring other commodities.

This naturally passes into the much longer Chapter on Capital, which, as we have seen is concerned with the question of how capital, which in generalised form is itself a sum of money-values and itself *circulates* in the process of exchange, can function and in particular derive a profit. ("*Money as capital* is an aspect of money which goes beyond its simple character as money. It can be regarded as a higher realisation; as it can be said that man is a developed ape. . . . In any case, *money as capital is* distinct from *money as money*."). The social function of capital is as purchase of the commodity labour-power, which has itself become a commodity by an historical process of proletarianisation in the transitional epoch of 'primitive accumulation'. There is accordingly "already a distinction of form between the exchange of capital and labour, and simple exchange—two different processes". "Surplus value is not explicable by exchange" seeing that "surplus value in general is value in excess of the equivalent".

Translation and Text

While this edition will be widely welcomed, opinions may possibly vary about particular points in the translation and in the Foreword; different commentators may lay emphasis upon different points of significance in the work as a whole. The translation, for example has its occasional obscurities, crudities, also Americanisms which fall uneasily upon an English ear (doubtful distinction between "historic" and "historical" is one example; one could add perhaps the frequent use of a word like "specificity".) The translator explains that his bias has been towards keeping to as literal a translation as possible. To the present reviewer such detailed qualifications are fairly trivial beside the fact that the work has appeared and the achievement of producing it at this time and at such a price. There are those nonetheless who, while fully grateful for the present offering, will look forward to the appearance of the definitive edition of the work (after further textual examination and criticism by scholars of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute) which is due in the definitive 50-volume English edition of the work of Marx and Engels under preparation in this country by the firm of Lawrence and Wishart, and which will embody a good deal of further work on the text such as deciphering the often illegible handwriting, by Marx-editors in Berlin and Moscow. Then will be the time for a fuller and mature and more final review and judgement of this particular contribution to Marxiana in relation to later works and to these two collaborators' work as a whole.

Is There a Theory of Art in Marx?

Hans Hess

(We print below a lecture given in the University of Sussex on January 29th 1973, in the Series "Problems in Marxist Theory". The author is Reader in the History and Theory of Art of the University of Sussex. He has published a monograph on Lyonel Feininger. His forthcoming book—"Painting in the 20th Century"—will be published by Chatto & Windus for the Sussex University Press. A monograph on Georg Grosz will be published by Studio Vista and VEB Verlag der Kunst, Dresden. The references are together at the end of the article. The subtitles are ours.)

SECTION I

On the first page of the first section of the first chapter of the first volume of "Kapital", Marx writes:

> "A commodity is . . . a thing whose qualities enable it—in *one way or another—to satisfy human needs*. The nature of these needs . . . for instance if they arise in the stomach or in the imagination, does not alter the matter."[1]

Marx recognises that material needs as well as imaginary needs are equally historical.

Engels, in his funeral oration, made the simple statement, that Marx found that men must eat, drink and live "before they can make politics,

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science, art, religion, etc.", that, in other words, the forms of the state, the concepts of law, art and religion, must be explained "on the basis of the material conditions, and not as hitherto, the other way round."[2]

> "Our conception of history . . . does not explain practice from the idea, but explains the formation of ideas from material practice."[3]

Thought then arises in man's history from his material experience, the modes of thought as well as their formalisations, that is art, poetry, writing, religion, as well as legal, political concepts and constructs which Marx summarises under the term "superstructure", built over and above actual social material relations of production.

In the preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* he says:

> "the economic structure of society; the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness"[4].

and in the "18th Brumaire":

> "Upon the different forms of property, upon the social condition of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations."[5]

Superstructure and Ideology

A question which must be understood, and I think is not always correctly understood, is the full content of Marx's concept of superstructure and ideology: religion, art, law, politics, etc. When Marx refers to the ideas in religion, art, politics, civil life which arise in a society, they are to him not just the ideas, but the forms in which they operate—in other words the instruments of art, politics, religion, etc. They are not only the "celestialised reflexes of social life",[6] not only the imagery of religion, but the building of churches. Not just the ideas of "law", but the lawcourts are ideological structures, and here the work of art as an instrument fits perfectly in the ideological structure as the *modus operandi* of the idea.

The word "ideology" thus does not indicate only a "body of ideas", but it indicates the structures in which such ideas operate and become active.

The material instruments and organisations themselves are ideological structures which form the superstructure.

There are in the writings of Marx many more references to art as part of the ideological superstructure than to specific works of art or artists. It is thus from his numerous internally connected statements, that the views of Marx on art and its function can be deduced.

The Work of Art

The work of art—considered as an object—operates within the structure of ideology, without having to deny its material existence, and in its material existence incorporates properties which—though necessary for its ideological function at the time—do not have to lose their attractiveness for later periods. The error is to consider the work of art as eternal in its message—though long lasting as a product. As the work of art speaks a symbolic language of signs and significations, it has to be read differently at the time of its creation and in successive societies.

The visual arts are no different from other symbolisations such as language or writing. Mental constructs or ideas cannot be transmitted except in symbolic forms or structures. The need to learn to produce them and the need to learn to read them, is a necessity of the communication of ideas. There is no mental intercourse without signs and signals, without a symbolic language.

Marx says in "The German Ideology":

> "Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness, as it exists for other men, and for that reason is really beginning to exist for me personally as well. For language like consciousness arises from the need—the necessity of intercourse with other men."[7]

and further:

> "The production of ideas, of conceptions of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. . . . The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions. . . . Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence—and the existence of men is their actual life-process."[8]

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* he says:

> "Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my *own* existence *is* social activity."[9]

and in the *Grundrisse* of 1857-58:

> "Ideas do not exist separate from language."[10]
> "Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness."[11]

Social Forms of Expression

If we consider the visual arts as a language of signs, then we have to see that the symbols of that

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visual language—its very writing—not just the text but also the signs, are in themselves social forms of expression.

What we call a work of art, and that makes its understanding so difficult, was from the outset a product of labour, even of specialised labour, which was intended as the symbolisation of an idea. The work of art is a material artefact which operates in reality as the embodiment of an idea. The work of art mediates between the world of production and the world of thought and mental constructs.

The work of art has a function which has never attached it solely to the world of production, that is, the world of food and furniture, and it has never wholly belonged to the world of self-enfranchised philosophers, poets and thinkers.

In *The German Ideology* Marx formulates the division of labour:

> "Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it is *really* conceiving something without conceiving something *real;* from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."[12]

Where art is concerned Marx was proved right late in history, because the consciousness of the artist separated itself from existing practice very late —not before the Renaissance—thus the state of "pure" art, was reached much later than "pure" philosophy. The division of manual from mental labour was the central argument of Leonardo da Vinci in his proto-Marxist trattato *Paragone*, where he claimed that the painter, like the poet, worked mainly with his intellect, and that his manual labour was insignificant compared to his mental effort.

This new artist—and for the first time the word artist is justified—now joins the ranks of the thinkers. He joins the liberal arts and justifies his existence by his powers of invention and imagination.

Art and Ruling Class

Having included the artist, as we must, amongst the producers of ideas, or at least as the executant of the ideological vision, we can again, directly from Marx and Engels, adduce an approach to the rôle of the artist in the service of the ruling class.

From *The German Ideology*:

> "The class which has the means of *material* production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby . . . the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas. . . .
>
> "The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things, consciousness . . . therefore, as they rule as a class . . . they do this in their whole range, hence, among other things, rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch."[13]

Stressing the division of labour within the ruling class. Marx says in *The German Ideology*:

> "Inside this class one part appears as the thinkers . . . (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood)."[14]

This is where the artist belongs—but there is also his public. These are the other members of the class, whose:

> "attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of the class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves!"[15]

According to Marx the actual rulers have less time for illusions, because they have the real work to do.

Philosophers, however, have no real responsibility for production and all the time in the world to build their systems in the air. Marx said that:

> "In direct contrast to German philosophy, . . . we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive. . . . We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process, we demonstrate the development of ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. . . . Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness thus no longer retain the semblance of independence."[16]

Semblance of Independence

It is exactly this semblance of independence, which lies at the root of all misconceptions of "Art".

Marx has an answer to the question:

> "*Why ideologists put everything upside down.* Clergymen, lawyers, politicians . . . (Statesmen in general), moralists. . . .
>
> "*Autonomy of the business through separation of labour.*... About the relation of their trade (*Handwerk*) with reality, they have to create the necessary illusions, which are given by the nature of their very trade."[17]

Because each man thinks with his own head, the illusion that such thoughts are his own can easily arise, but the fact, that each man has to talk with his own voice, does not have to give rise to the illusion that the language he uses is his own.

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The artist as producer—the artist as a worker—has not interested Marx very much, but the fact that he is a specialist as an outcome of the division of labour is important, which in turn determines the resulting consciousness. What Marx said about every individual in *The German Ideology* (1845/6):

> "My relation to my surroundings is my consciousness."[18]

applies to the artist as well, and I requote:

> "The material of my activity is given to me as a social product."[19]

So it is given to the artist, who transforms the material by his social activity.

The work of art contains in itself the work and the idea; labour and thought are mutually dependant. The work of art arises in the world of social ideas and mediates a social idea through work by manual labour.

Theory of Reality

The next problem is an exceedingly difficult problem, because it raises the question of Marx's theory of knowledge.

In his second thesis on Feuerbach (1845), Marx says:

> "The question if human thought corresponds to objective truth, is not a question of theory but a question of *praxis*. In praxis man has to prove the truth . . . the reality and power . . . of his thought. The argument about the reality or unreality of thought—isolated from praxis—is a purely *scholastic* question."[20]

The question is an old one: "Can we know reality"? I would not have raised that question here if it did not concern—by implication—the subject of art.

One of the most important statements made by Marx has remained relatively unknown—it can be found in the 1857 *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*. (Not to be confused with the *Preface* of 1859.) There Marx develops a theory of reality in which the relation of thought and objects, is reconciled, in a very modern way: as different forms of the same reality:

> "The concrete is concrete because it is the comprehension (*Zusammenfassung*) of many determinants, thus unity of the manifold. In thought this process thus appears as com-prehension (*Zusammenfassung*), as the result and not as the starting point, although it is the real starting point and thus the starting point of the idea (*Anschauung*) and representation (*Vorstellung*). . . . Hence for consciousness . . . for which the comprehending mind is that of real man, and thus the comprehended world the real world . . . this is . . . right in so far, as the concrete totality of thinking (thought), as concrete thought (*Gedankenkonkretum*) is, in fact, a product of thought, of com-prehension; but by no means does it exist outside or above the ideas and representations, which simulate independent concepts, but are the workings out into concepts of ideas and representations."[21]

This exactly distinguishes Marx's thought from idealism.

> "The whole as it appears in the mind as a totality (*Gedankenganzes*), is a product of the thinking brain, which has appropriated the world in its own specific manner, a manner which is different from the artistic, religious, practical-mental form of appropriation."[22]

Marx implies: that the reality man appropriates, is the sum of its comprehensions—including the artistic—but though each one is differently constructed and apprehended, they together form a totality. Marx here accepts the whole range of an artistic appropriation of reality next to the many other possible forms of comprehending reality, which, however, never loses its materiality but is comprehended in different aspects.

In *Kapital* he said, that:

> "it is easier to find an earthly source for misty creations—than the correspondingly celestialised forms of these relations."[23]

Insisting (in *The German Ideology*) that:

> "the phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process."[24]

There is no accounting for the shape of the "forms" of these phantoms, except to say, that forms are a necessity of symbolisation.

But how exactly such forms arise in society, and how they are connected with the modes of production, he had not found the time to elucidate.

In the preface to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx promised that:

> "I shall issue . . . the critique of law, ethics, politics, etc., in a series of distinct independent pamphlets."[25]

Whenever Marx in this context says: "etc.", he means: art and religion as well. The separate pamphlets were never written.

The Power of Ideas

But Marx was very aware of the need for such a critique:

> "It will be found that the interconnection between political economy and the state, law, ethics, civil life, etc., is touched on in the present work only to the extent to which political economy itself . . . touches on these subjects."[26]

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Ten years after the death of Marx, Engels in 1893 (July 14th), wrote a very important letter to Franz Mehring, where he says, that neither he nor Marx ever found the time to complete the edifice:

> "One important point is missing . . . we are all equally guilty . . . we all have put . . . the main emphasis . . . on the *derivation* of political, legal and other ideological concepts . . . on the economic facts *and we had to do that*. But we have neglected to deal with the way in which such concepts, etc., arise."

He tries to make up this omission in a brief paragraph:

> "Ideological thinking is a process which, though it is carried out by the so-called thinker with consciousness, is carried out with false consciousness. The proper forces which move him remain unknown to him, or else it would not be an ideological process. He imagines false—that is imaginary (*scheinbare*) (ghostlike) forces. Because it is a thought process, he supposes its content as well as its form to derive from pure thought—either his own, or that of his predecessors. He works with mental material (*Gedankenmaterial*) which he uncritically assumes to be the product of thinking, and never analyses it for a distant origin, independent of thought. It appears to him *natural* that all action—because *mediated* by thought—in the last instance is *founded* in thought. . . .
>
> "It is this semblance of an autonomous history . . . which has blinded most people. This question we have neglected more than it deserves. Because we have denied an independent *historical development* of the several ideological spheres, which have played their rôle in history, we are accused of denying their historical effectiveness."[27]

In brief, Engels on behalf of Marx, denies that they ever underrated the effectiveness of mere ideas. What they denied, was their origin in vacuo. Ideas are according to Marx so effective, that, to quote him:

> "A theory becomes material force when it takes hold of the masses."[28]

No idealist has ever given such power to mere ideas.

SECTION II

A Statement on Art

The best known statement by Marx on art has given rise to a vast body of commentary.

In the *Introduction to the Critique* of 1857, Marx in a very sketchy way—really in notes for himself—gives as a heading: "The unequal relation of the development of material production, f.i. artistic production."[29] This is one of the questions he had regretted not having been able to elucidate:

> "It is well known that certain periods of highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organisation. Witness the example of the Greeks as compared with the modern nations. . . . As regards certain forms of art, as, e.g., the epos, it is admitted that they can never be produced in the world-epoch-making form as soon as art as such comes into existence; in other words, that in the domain of art certain important forms of it are possible only at a low stage of its development. If that be true of the mutual relations of different forms of art *within the domain of art itself*, . . . it is far less surprising that the same is true of the relation of art as a whole to the general development of society. . . .
>
> "It is a well known fact that Greek mythology was not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also the very ground from which it had sprung. Is the view of nature and social relations which shaped Greek imagination and Greek (art) possible in the age of automatic machinery, and railways, and locomotives, and electric telegraphs? Where does Vulcan come in as against Roberts & Co., Jupiter, as against the lightning rod; and Hermes, as against the Credit Mobilier? All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination; hence it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature. What becomes of the Goddess Fame side by side with Printing House Square? . . .
>
> "But the difficulty is not in grasping the idea that Greek art and epos are bound up with certain forms of social development. It rather lies in understanding why they still constitute with us a source of aesthetic enjoyment (*Kunstgenuss*) and in certain respects prevail as the standard and model beyond attainment. . . .
>
> "Why should the social childhood of mankind, where it had obtained its most beautiful development, not exert eternal charm as an age that will never return? . . .
>
> "The charm their art has for us does not conflict with the primitive character of the social order from which it had sprung."[30]

The question receives no real answer "the eternal charm of an age that will never return" is an endearing thought, but it isn't Marxism—simply because the word "eternal" is not in the Marxist vocabulary.

Dual Character of Concept of Ideology

Marx, as we know, was himself the gifted and highly educated son of a bourgeois family. He was steeped in the Classics, his doctoral thesis he wrote on Democritus and Epicure, he shared the common property of classical Greece with the German *Bildungsburgertum*—an untranslateable word describing that section of the German bourgeoisie which sought in education and knowledge its mode of social advancement against an entrenched

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aristocracy. The cultural heritage took the place of ancient lineage—in the ideological function of the "knowledge of art" as an "educated" possession. The ghost of art appears to Marx not as ghostlike but real.

The work of art has two distinct histories: the first is the history of the making of the work of art—the second is the history of the surviving object and its reception, when it has shed its function and enters the world as art.

Marx failed to see that what he calls "charm" is really prestige, and that the prestige of Greek antiquity, be it in art, philosophy, drama, civilisation, had been deliberately maintained—that he himself was, for once, the victim of a cultural assumption.

What had puzzled him when he asked the question of Greek art, was really the question of the "reception" of art. Its reception and thus survival through many generations and different modes of production. But Marx did not see that it was not the same thing which had survived, it had lost its content, only the form remained—beautiful as it was. What it had lost, was its living function and its place in the class struggle.

The work of art thus deceives us, by its attractive presence it obscures its mostly less attractive function.

From its inception the work of art developed aesthetic qualities as the carrier of its message. The appeal to all the senses was an essential part of getting the message which the work contained, across to the victim, lost in admiration. Admiration, you might observe, places the admirer in a position of inferiority—it is he who looks up—this exactly is the idea, the spectator or believer is meant to be overawed, the work of art is a piece of establishment furniture, which makes it clear where power resides.

Marx actually knew that art forms, especially when re-used are ideological disguises. In the "18th Brumaire" he writes that the:

> "gladiators (of the bourgeoisie) found in the tradition of the Roman Republic the ideals and art forms, the selfdeceptions, which they needed."[31]

In a letter to Lassalle of July 22nd 1861, speaking about the dramatists under Louis XIV, he says:

> "It is equally certain that they understood the Greeks exactly in the way which conformed to their own artistic needs and got stuck for a long time with so-called 'classical' drama."

Here Marx sees the re-use of Greek drama as an ideological necessity of a contemporary situation.

He goes on:

> "The misinterpreted form is just the general form which at a certain stage of historical development can be put to general use."[32]

This is very precise. The distinction between the original form and content, and the misinterpreted form for a new content, demonstrates the dual character of the concept of ideology.

In the first instance, the work of art honestly proclaims its ideological message. In its survival state, the original becomes a fake and a prop of what Marx calls: "false consciousness".

It is possible to throw more light on that much quoted passage by Marx on Greek art and his own innocent enjoyment of it, because he refers to the question again in a different context. In the *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, he contrasts capitalism with other, and better, forms of society in the past. I need not stress that Marx was not a backward looking Utopian, reaching for the golden age.

But compared to capitalism, many earlier stages of social organisation seemed preferable. Marx has quite often a good word to say for patriarchial relations. Here he says:

> "Thus the ancient conception in which man always appears . . . as the aim of production, seems very much more exalted than the modern world, in which production is the aim of man, and wealth the aim of production."[33]

Again he refers to Greece:

> "Hence in one way the childlike world of the ancients appears to be superior, . . . in so far, as we seek for closed shape, form and established limitation."[34]

It is a Marxian *cri de coeur* for social harmony.

Greek art is perfect, because it is in harmony not just in itself, but with the society. Here Marx refers to Greek art, not with an aesthetic but with a revolutionary bias:

> "The Ancients provide a narrow satisfaction, whereas the modern world leaves us unsatisfied, or where it appears to be satisfied with itself, *vulgar and mean*."[35]

SECTION III

Production and Consumption of Art

There are some interesting comments on the dialectics of the production and consumption of art. In the modern world the production of art creates, like any other commodity its own market:

> "Production does not only furnish the material for a need, it also furnishes the need for the material. . . . The work of art—exactly as any other product—creates a public with a sense of art capable of enjoying beauty. . . . Production does not only create an object for a subject—but also the subject for the object."

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In short, the object once created becomes a need of the consumer:

> "and consumption in turn, produces the *gifts* (Anlagen) of the producer."[36]

The concept that human gifts are the product of social labour is central to Marx. The craftsman might still appear to display social skills, but the individual artist—the new artist whom Leonardo proclaimed—appears to be unique and a selfwilled creator.

In *The German Ideology* there is one interesting passage in Marx's polemic against Stirner, who imagines that Raphael has created his works independently, so to say as a genius. Marx argues:

> "Raphael, as much as any other artist, was conditioned by the technical progress of art, by the organisation of society, and the division of labour in his locality. . . . Whether an individual like Raphael can develop his talent, depends on the demand, which again depends on the division of labour and the resulting state of culture. (*Bildungsverhältnisse*).
>
> "Stirner stands well below the viewpoint even of the bourgeoisie, by proclaiming the uniqueness of scientific and artistic work."[37]

It is in this context, that the statement:

> "The exclusive concentration of artistic talent in the unique individual, and with that the corollary of the suppression of talent in the masses is a consequence of the division of labour. Even if in certain historic conditions, everyone could be an excellent painter, this need not exclude also *being* an original painter."[38]

Marx considers the artist as a man of talent—not genius—whose talent if needed, will develop and even originality will become a social and not a personal gift. Marx is equally aware that creative activity is hard work, he puts it the other way round:

> "Work is a positive, creative activity."[39]

> "Really free labour—the composing of music, for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort."[40]

He says this in an argument against Adam Smith, who had stated: "that work is always a burden."

In capitalism the artist as producer plays a dual role, because he can now be hired for the production not only of "ideas" but of "surplus value". In his *Theories of Surplus Value* (1862-63) he says:

> "A writer is a productive worker not in so far, as he produces ideas, but in so far, as he enriches . . . the publisher in so far, as he is working for a wage."[41]

Marx defines labour not by its content or result, but by the social form in which it appears:

> "Production cannot be separated from the act of production, as with all performing artists, orators, actors, teachers, doctors, clergymen. . . . To the audience the actor appears as an artist, to his employer as a *productive* worker."[42]

He really argues against Monsieur Henri Storch (*Cours d'économie politique* etc., 1823), who had separated material production from mental production.

Having shown the dual character of the artist in the production of surplus value and the production of his art, Marx says:

> "All the manifestations of capitalist production in these fields (art, theatre) are so insignificant compared to the totality of production, that they can be totally ignored."[43]

Ideological Role of the Artist

But whilst the economic importance of the artist in capitalist society is insignificant, his ideological rôle is not. The last refuge of bourgeois arguments for the perpetuation of class difference is the argument:

> "that one class is needed to do the work, so that another class can look after the mental needs of society."

As Engels put it in: *The Housing Question* (1872-73).[44]

And here the artist, or rather the image of the artist, is still being used as one of the main props of that assumption, and he plays, whether he likes it or not, his part in the class struggle.

Engels says in his *Preface* to the "18th Brumaire" (1885):

> "the law according to which all historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, religious, philosophical or some other ideological domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes."[45]

This is the basic assumption on which all thoughts of Marx and Engels have to be understood.

SECTION IV

In Communist Society

There is one more question—what will happen when the class struggle is over? What will happen to the artist and art in a future society?

Engels hopes: that one day the monopoly of the ruling class in the arts, science, manners and education will become "the common property of society as a whole."[46] This, I think, is the accepted view of socialists, and the line taken in socialist countries today.

That "the exclusive concentration of artistic talent in a few individuals and its consequent

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suppression in the large masses is the result of the division of labour," Marx and Engels had jointly said in "The German Ideology".[47]

> "In communist society where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity . . . each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes. . . . Society makes it possible . . . for me to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening and criticise after dinner, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic."[48]

> "In a communist organisation of society . . . there will be no more painters but only men who . . . also paint."[49]

But in the *Grundrisse* Marx really goes much further than that! When

> "the surplus labour of the masses has ceased to be a condition for the development of wealth . . . in the same way that the non-labour of the few has ceased to be a condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind . . . all members of society can develop their education in the arts, sciences, etc., thanks to the free time and means available to all."[50] "Free time . . . naturally transforms anyone who enjoys it into a different person, and it is a different person who then enters the direct process of production."[51]

In this direct process of production the distinction between the producer and the consumer of art, will abolish itself.

Communist Men and Women

It is this new man in Communism, with whom Marx is concerned:

> "what is wealth if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc., of individuals . . . if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions . . . the evolution of all human powers as such unmeasured by any *previously established* yardstick."[52]

Marx summarises the past and the future history of man becoming man in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844:*

> ". . . it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers (*Wesenskräfte*), . . . that all objects become for him the *objectification of himself,* become objects which confirm and realise his individuality. . . ."

I quote this extract from a long, and possibly the most difficult passage in all Marx—on alienation and the human essence, because it leads him to the aesthetic question, aesthetic in the full sense—the appropriation of the world by the senses and man's relation to the object:

> ". . . the sense of an object for me goes only so far as *my* senses go . . . for this reason the senses of the social man are *other* senses than those of the non-social man. . . ."

Man has been made by his own labour which is also his own history.

> ". . . The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present."[53]

In this formation of the senses and the sensitivities, the work of art, a product of man's labour, becomes an instrument of his selfdefinition:

> "through the actual concrete material unfolding richness of the human essence, will the wealth of subjective *human* sensibilities, with a musical ear, an eye for the beauty of form, in short, senses, capable of enjoyment, senses, which act as human powers, be developed and created."[54]

Man thus defines and creates himself by his developing powers of appropriating the world sensuously and aesthetically.

Marx's faith in the historic perfectability of the human species knows no bounds:

> ". . . All history is the preparation for '*man*' to become the object of *sensuous* consciousness and for the needs of 'man as man' to become (natural, sensuous) needs."[55]

Art and Life Became One

The experience of all the senses will become the human condition: ". . . when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away . . ."[56] only then will man fully possess his own essence and his world.

We cannot even begin to understand that new man, because:

> "Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided, that an object only becomes one when we *own* it."[57]

Thus the idea of "possessing" art, in the form of knowledge or ownership is the only one we have, because:

> ". . . in place of *all* physical and mental senses through the alienation of *all* these senses, the sense of *ownership* (*Haben*) has taken their place."[58]

Only when private property has been abolished, when man has overcome the alienation from his true essence, will he be in full possession of his humanity. In that state of perfection Art as such will be superseded, as Art and Life will have become one.

FOOTNOTES

Having worked from the German text, the author has frequently used his own translations. Where an existing English translation has been quoted, this is indicated in the notes.

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Abbreviations:

MEW = *Karl Marx—Friedrich Engels Werke*, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1956.

MESW = *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, selected works in two volumes, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 5th edition, Moscow, 1962.

[1] Vol. I, 4th ed., Hamburg, 1890, p.1.

[2] "Das Begräbnis von Karl Marx", *Der Sozialdemokrat*, no. 13, 22.3.1883, in: MEW, vol. 19, pp. 335/336.

[3] Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels: "Die deutsche Ideologie" (1845/1846): "I. Feuerbach", MEW, vol. 3, pp. 37/38—English translation: W. Lough: "The German Ideology", ed. by R. Pascal, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1938, p. 28.

[4] "Zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie", Introduction, 1859, MEW, vol. 13, p. 8—English translation: MESW, vol. I, p. 363.

[5] "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte" (Dec. 1851-Mar. 1952), MEW, vol. 8, p. 139—English translation: "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", MESW, vol. I, p. 272.

[6] Cf. "Kapital", vol. I, 4th ed., Hamburg, 1890, p. 393 note 89.

[7] MEW, vol. 3, p. 30—English translation: W. Lough, ed. R. Pascal, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1938, p. 19.

[8] *Ibid*, p. 26—English translation: *Ibid*, pp. 13/14.

[9] (1844), MEW, supplement, vol. I, p. 538—English translation: 2nd ed., Moscow, 1961, p. 104.

[10] "Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Oekonomie" (Rohentwurf), Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953, p. 80—Quoted from: "Marx/Engels: Ueber Kunst und Literatur", vol. I, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1967, p. 220.

[11] "Die deutsche Ideologie", MEW, vol. 3, p. 30—English translation: W. Lough: "The German Ideology" ed. R. Pascal, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1938, p. 19. (Repeat, see top of p. 4; note 7 above.)

[12] *Ibid*, p. 31—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 20.

[13] *Ibid*, p. 46—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 39.

[14] *Ibid*, p. 46—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 40.

[15] *Ibid*, p. 47—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 40.

[16] *Ibid*, p. 26—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 14.

[17] Notes on the last two pages of MS: "Part I. Feuerbach", MEW, vol. 3, p. 539.

[18] MEW, vol. 3, p. 30**—cut in MS.

[19] MEW, Supplement vol. I, p. 538—(quoted first time on p. 4; see note 9 above).

[20] MEW, vol. 3, p. 533.

[21] "*Einleitung* (zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie)" (1857), MEW, vol. 13, p. 632.

[22] *Ibid*, pp. 632/633.

[23] Vol. I, 4th ed., Hamburg, 1890, p. 336, note 89.

[24] "Die deutsche Ideologie", MEW, vol. 3, p. 26—English translation: W. Lough: "The German Ideology", ed. R. Pascal, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1938, p. 14.

[25] "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte" (1844), MEW, Supplement, vol. I, p. 467—English translation: 2nd ed., Moscow, 1961, p. 15.

[26] *Ibid*, p. 467—English translation: *Ibid*, p. 15.

[27] MEW, vol. 39, pp. 96/97.

[28] "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung." (1843/1844), MEW, vol. I, p. 385. (On the Critique of Hegel's philosophy of Right).

[29] 6, MEW, vol. 13, p. 640.

[30] *Ibid*, pp. 640/642—English translation: "Literature and Art—Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Selections from their writings", International Publishers, Current Book House, Bombay, 2nd. ed., 1956, pp. 16/17. (author's italics.)

[31] "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte" (Dec. 1851-Jan. 1852), MEW, vol. 8, p. 116.

[32] MEW, vol. 30, p. 615.

[33] E. J. Hobsbawm: "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations", Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1964, p. 84. (Translated from: "Grundrisse", 1857/1858, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953.)

[34] *Ibid*, p. 85.

[35] *Ibid*, p. 85.

[36] "Einleitung zur Kritik der politischen Oekonomie", 1857, MEW, vol. 13, p. 624.

[37] "Das Leipziger Konzil. III. Sankt Max", MEW, vol. 3, p. 378.

[38] *Ibid*, pp. 378/379.

[39] David MacLellan: "Grundrisse", MacMillan, London, 1971, p. 126. (Translated from: "Grundrisse" 1857/1858, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953.)

[40] *Ibid*, p. 124.

[41] "Theorien über den Mehrwert" (Jan. 1862-July 1863), MEW, vol. 26/I, p. 128.

[42] Notes by Marx to: *Ibid*, p. 386.

[43] *Ibid*, p. 386.

[44] "Zur Wohnungsfrage", MEW, vol. 18, p. 221.

[45] "Vorrede zur 3. Auflage", MEW, vol. 21, p. 249—English translation: MESW, vol. I, p. 246.

[46] Cf. "Zur Wohnungsfrage" (1872/1873), MEW, vol. 18, p. 221—English translation: "The Housing Question", MESW, vol. I, p. 565.

[47] "Das Leipziger Konzil. III. Sankt Max", MEW, vol. 3, pp. 378/379.

[48] "Part I. Feuerbach", *Ibid*, p. 33—English translation: W. Lough, ed. R. Pascal, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1938, p. 22.

[49] "Das Leipziger Konzil. III. Sankt Max, *Ibid*, p. 379.

[50] David MacLellan: "Grundrisse", MacMillan, London, 1971, p. 142. (Translated from: "Grundrisse", 1857/1858, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953.)

[51] *Ibid*, p. 148.

[52] E. J. Hobsbawm: "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations", Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1964, pp. 84/85. (Translated from: "Grundrisse", 1857/1858, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953.)

[53] "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte" (1844) MEW Supplement, vol. I, pp. 541/542—English translation; 2nd ed., Moscow 1961, pp. 107/108.

[54] *Ibid*, p. 541.

[55] *Ibid*, pp. 543/544—English translation: 2nd ed., Moscow, 1961, p. 111.

[56] E. J. Hobsbawm: "Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations", Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1964, p. 84. (Translated from: "Grundrisse" 1857/1858, Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1953.)

[57] "Oekonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte" (1844), MEW Supplement vol. I, p. 540.

[58] *Ibid*, p. 540.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Marxism and the Family

Marshall Harris

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The family is a complex social phenomenon. In some form it has been present throughout recorded history, and some way back into prehistory. An understanding of it must be many-sided, descriptive, analytical, and historical; and its significance must be evaluated in relation to many other social phenomena, especially sex, class, ideology and psychology. This is an attempt to touch on some of these aspects. The key question for Marxists is: what has been and is the role of the family in its development and today?

Each person experiences the family in an individual way—hence the many different aspects of that experience stressed by different individuals. But, beyond these subjective assessments, what is the historical social *essence* of the family?

The Feminist Challenge

Engels attempted an answer, based on anthropological data which today is questioned. The significance of his work, however, lies not in its assertions or data, but in its method: an attempt to give a historical, materialist account of the family, and its interdependence on and connection with the rise of private property, classes, and state. The questioning of his data is not a fundamental denial of Engels' conclusions. The new data can be easily assimilated whilst leaving the main argument intact. The challenge which *is* fundamental, cutting across hitherto unquestioned beliefs and assumptions, is the one which issues from the Feminist movement.

If the Feminist challenge is correct it must shake many of the accepted views of Marxists and Communists. This would be analogous to what we expect from working people reaching towards scientific class-consciousness: to discard old ideas in favour of ones which conform with their needs, such as solidarity and co-operation as opposed to individualism. In the case of the Feminist challenge men will have to learn to recognise sexism in themselves and in other men and organisations controlled by men: and try to overcome it!

I hope that what this article will show is that the Feminist challenge *is* historical and materialist and dialectical; that it goes further and deeper than Engels; that it demands an "agonising reappraisal" of many cherished beliefs. Undoubtedly a woman could express what I am trying to say more effectively; indeed much is derivative from Shulamith Firestone's "The Dialectic of Sex.[1] I hope that, coming from a man, what I write will be read by other men without them feeling under attack, and therefore unable to absorb the substance of this contribution.

The Feminist challenge hinges on the basic historical truth that *all* class societies, including those where the working class is the ruling class, have been and are patriarchal, i.e. male-dominated. *All* class struggles have been between classes of men (in recorded history), led and fought out by men, with ideologies restricted not only by class interests but by *male* class interests, which have considered the interests of women only to the extent that they served the interests of men.

In all the class struggles which have shaped society since prehistory, women have never played a leading or determining role. They have been supporters of and auxiliaries to men, serving their needs, demands, and interests. Of the few women who entered into the leadership of any revolution, still fewer fought for the specific interests of women where they differed from those of men. And those few, like Kollontai, failed.

How many revolutions made a determined effort to re-educate men in their ideas about women? The feebleness of the effort reflects the real importance attached to the question—naturally, since both leadership and rank-and-file were male dominated.

Engels momentarily recognised the maleness of class:

> "The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and *the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.*"[2]

[1] Paladin Books, 1972, 50p.

[2] *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Lawrence & Wishart, p. 129, (my emphasis M.H.).

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Unfortunately, and not least because of his maleness, Engels did not pursue the implications of this remark —the truth that class society and male supremacist society coincide, are one and the same, despite other differences between types and epochs of class society.

Male Supremacism

Male supremacism, patriarchy, or sexism (I think the terms are practically synonymous) produces class division. The male, possessing weapons and other significant means of production, asserts his supremacy, develops the division of labour, and exploits women. This goes for early man as it remains for modern man. In turn, class division generates and needs male supremacism. The dominant role of the male in society, acquired through his possession of the means of production, led to the existence of property, authority vested in an individual or group but not the whole of society, class division and conflict, and, of course, eventually the state.

Parallel with all this, to sustain and justify it, developed concepts of Law and Order, institutionalised violence, ownership, disputes over ownership, and war. Also, and of great importance, it led to male possession of the means of *re*production—ownership and domination of women; and ownership of the produce of reproduction, children, along with the produce of production, goods. Male ownership and domination of women and children are *significant* historical facts about the family, and give a clue as to its role as perpetuator of sexist and dominant-class values. This theme will be returned to below.

Recognition that all class struggles have been between men is not enough. The real challenge to vulgar Marxism is in what follows from that: that the ending of struggles between classes, defined in terms of their relationships to the technical and economic means of production of material wealth, does not end the patriarchal system; nor does it *guarantee* the ending of sexism. "Ownership of the means of production in the hands of the working class" can only mean ownership in the hands of men, *as long as working women (which includes "housewives") are permitted to play only minor, supportive, male-directed roles in the struggle.* The patriarchal system, and therefore the oppression and exploitation of women, will continue under "socialism" if no major changes take place in the movement. The existence of reforms under "socialism", though alleviating some aspects of that oppression, does not alter the fact of male hegemony, and should not be confused with a *revolutionary* change in the relations between women and men in society.

If authoritarianism, egotism, and violence stem from patriarchal class society, then the continuance of male hegemony in the Soviet Union, other countries, and in the Communist Parties, must provide a primary explanation for the abuses of people, the bureaucracy, and authoritarianism which have occurred there. The family, as I hope to show, *necessarily* perpetuates the negative ideology underlying these evils.

The Two Enemies of Women

The male/class equation further implies that the struggle for the liberation of womankind is continuous and goes beyond the class struggle. Right now working women face two enemies: male capitalists (for female ones are exceptions and "freaks"), and working class men who, though themselves oppressed, are also the oppressors of working women.[3] This latter oppressiveness will be hotly denied by many, especially men. However, Feminists are not talking only about conscious oppression, but also about unconscious oppression—about men who are, objectively, by their roles, thoughts, and actions, agents of the domination of women by men.

Working class men do not exert their domination through ownership of factories, or possession of police forces and armies[4] but through their roles as husbands and fathers. The male-dominated institutions of Capitalism reinforce these roles, and, in turn, the institutions, especially their personnel, are reinforced by the existence of the male-dominated patriarchal family.

Hence it is meaningless to consider the family without recognising that one of its functions, in this society at least, is to maintain the domination of men over women and children.

Ideological Role of the Family

Of course, like any other phenomenon, the family contains within it contradictions. The problem is to decide what are the dominant aspects of these contradictions; i.e. whether as a whole the family in this society, and in Socialist societies, is a "good" or "bad" thing, in relation to its social functions and to the things we aspire to, as revolutionaries.

Perhaps the most important role of the family, in patriarchal class societies, is ideological. We recognise the incredible power of the media here, but we are loth to face the fact that TV, newspapers, etc. are relatively new historical phenomena. The family is much older and *more* powerful, because it is so personal and the individual is more deeply involved in it. Throughout its history the constant

[3] This does not necessarily mean that the forms of struggle against both must be identical or contain the same degree of antagonism.

[4] Although possession of the wage packet and a strong fist often make up for this.

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thread of ideology which has been propagated in the family, on the material base of the dependence relationships of its structure, has been the domination of male over female. The family is the environment in which the infant becomes "socialised' that is, where it learns its role, and how to relate "correctly" to others. It learns *how* to be a girl or boy, through interaction with and observation of its mother and father (with other men and women reinforcing the learning), and via its sisters and brothers (with other children, learning the same lessons, as reinforcers).

It learns how to be subordinate to its elders, especially parents, who are more experienced and powerful, and who own and control its economic needs. In general it experiences the structure of society at large, within its own little sub-structure, the family. It learns the limits of permitted action, beyond which it incurs wrath or disapproval from the powerful ones. Even "liberal" parents in the nuclear family impose their wills on their children. They *insist* on standards; they *require* the child to condition itself to the tyranny of time, from bowel-movement and feeding to the treadmill of regular school attendance, regardless of the child's will. Even the use of "reason" is a form of tyranny—unhesitatingly pitting experience against the "naivety" of the child. In brief, parents exert power over the weak.

In the family the girl and boy learn to be subordinate to the parents. Both, and the mother, are subordinate to the father. Boy and father get special consideration from mother. Boy is temporarily subordinate to father, until he reaches manhood. Girl remains permanently subordinate to all men. So the child is conditioned to live in a male bourgeois society. She or he learns to accept the presence of authority and how to respond to it. Authority is a "god-given" fact of its whole life. In the family the child learns to pit its power against that of authority; it learns to love and hate authority (which often leads to confusion and neurosis); and it learns its sex-role.

Given the structure of the nuclear family—father, mother, and "their" children—and the fact that people re-create the family in order to reproduce the *same* learned roles, how can humanity retain this institution and yet produce a new generation free from ego-obsession, desire for power, competitiveness, and greed? And how can it produce people freed from "natural" assumptions about man's role and women's role?

Towards New Forms of Living

Some of the contradictions in the family (as in male bourgeois society) mask its oppressive character. The love, kindness, and consideration which exist to some degree in most families, despite the tensions, are positive. They exist because people have to live together in these units and have to make life livable. In modern bourgeois society, too, there is an element of choice in coming together to form a family; so there is often a basis of love which may survive the damaging effects of the power-structure/possession-complex which the family represents. All this is equally true of working-class and bourgeois families. In our society the positive side of the family is inflated ideologically by sentimentality, which gives a one-sided and false picture of its reality. Moreover, the very brutalisation and inhuman values perpetuated by this mini-society equip people to survive in male bourgeois society at large; this adds plausibility to its "value" as a social unit. But survival here means survival of the worst aspects, the ideology of the sex-and-class divided world. Revolutionaries need a different ideology.

Revolution can only occur when the subjective view of society, including the family, has been broken down; when the objective contradictions have been revealed and the dominant ideology is seen to be false; when the advantages of the system—societal and familial—are understood to be outweighed by the disadvantages; that is, when the people understand the nature of their own oppression. Hence the importance of the ideological and theoretical struggle, and the need for Marxists to help in understanding the nature of the family.

At present the family is here, and Communists should fight, not to "protect the family", but to protect the interests of the individuals in the family. In the long term, people will have to evolve new forms of living, In the interim, we must develop policies and practices, for ourselves and the movement, which will assist this evolution materially and ideologically.

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Betty Reid

Irene Brennan refers to the "unease" which is sometimes aroused by the slogans of the women's liberation movement, and explains, correctly I think, that this sometimes arises from a confusion between immediate and long-term ends.

Marxists who do have these reservations, however, are not usually complaining about the necessarily diverse views emanating from a broad movement, and would indeed readily respond to the request of Maria Loftus that we should pay due tribute to the pioneering work[1] of that movement in thrusting vitally important issues on to the agenda. What they *are* concerned about is the tendency of some Marxists working within the movement to do no more, it would appear, than uncritically to reflect some of these views, without attempting to relate them to our general body of theory.

One-Dimensional Analysis

A case in point is the one-dimensional analysis made by Sue Slipman. Here we have described for us the all-powerful conditioning process of the mass media; the education system as almost totally conditioning; the family as representing in miniature the power structure outside; the oppression experienced by men mitigated by their ability to play an authoritative role within the family; the qualitatively different oppression experienced by women and children; the role of the family in reproducing for each generation the relationship to the means of production; the family not coming under attack within capitalism but rather nurtured as an essential tool, as one of the chief parts of the apparatus which allows the state machine to function.

Although some of these statements are clearly part of the truth, it is nevertheless in total a simplistic caricature of the forces operating within our society—postulating implicitly as it does an omnipotent ruling class, a brainwashed, helpless, passive population, and an elite which has to proselytise and exhort until by some unexplained and miraculous process it is able to educate and raise the consciousness of the masses. Such an analysis has far wider implications than its attitude to the family and is in fact incompatible with our whole general strategy. (Why should we fight, for example, for more university places for working class children if the role of education is almost totally a conditioning one?)

[1] An example is the recent attention to the problem of battered wives, an issue of crucial importance, and one raised by Julian Tudor Hart in the columns of the *Morning Star* some years ago, and not at that time taken up.

A few weeks ago a woman from the Philippines appeared on British television. She was interviewed in the West German hospital where she worked long hours to scrape together the money which was then sent home to maintain the husband and three young children she had not seen for three years. With dignity she answered the brash young interviewer. Yes, she was lonely. Yes, she missed her family. Last time she visited them her youngest child had not known her. She could not say how long it would be before she could save the fare again. Nor could she say when her long exile would end.

She shares the fate of thousands of men and women from the despoiled and impoverished countries, carrying out the menial tasks of the advanced capitalist societies, unaware of the great god "doing one's own thing", and impelled to extraordinary sacrifice by the strength of family ties. Would they not cast a sardonic eye on Sue Slipman's description, could they but read it? Are we not right to indict monopoly capitalism for its disposal of human lives, and for its disruption of family life, without thereby giving a blanket approval to the nature of the family in capitalist society?

Utopian Attitudes

In Britain whatever the modifications in the way that marriage as an institution is regarded, the drive of young people to achieve a one-to-one relationship and to find a place to set up home[2] and rear children has in no way weakened. On the contrary. And it is precisely in the frustration of these legitimate desires by the cost of living and the shortage of homes and many other negative features of our society that there is created a potentially active and revolutionary force ready to fight to change conditions if only they become aware of the right target, and understand the nature of the obstacles facing them. This awareness of their condition it is the task of the revolutionary party and its allies to create. And while it is absolutely correct to say (if indeed anyone has argued about it) that "Defence of the Family" is unacceptable as a slogan (it could be defence against contraception or nursery schools for example), it seems to me correct and necessary to speak of the defence of the family against Tory attacks, (which was the headline in the

[2] It is interesting to see the nostalgia expressed in some quarters for the old "extended family" pattern. True there was warmth and solidarity in adversity, but could there ever have been a more authoritative grouping, compelling, by a myriad of ties, the most rigid conformity to family demands, and often encouraging passivity to appalling conditions of life?

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Morning Star), against rent increases, housing cuts, removal of school milk, and so on.

These are immediate campaigning questions of crucial importance for the development of political understanding. We are not thereby implying that the family as it exists within capitalist society has our total support, any more than our fight for educational opportunity implies that we have any illusions about the dominant characteristic of education within a class society. While we can and must discuss the possible development of future life-styles, which in many cases will necessarily follow and not precede social change, we should not confuse such discussion with immediate campaigning. It is as if Communist candidates went out to convince the electorate to support the slogan "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" or met the aspirations of national liberation with the slogan "workers of the world unite".

It is this utopian approach with its attendant moralising and preaching attitude to persuade men and women to conform to what are considered to be more desirable forms of behaviour that is particularly in evidence when we come to the question of the rearing of young children.

With enviable certainty parents are lectured:

> "It is bad for children to be reared by untrained people and in the constricting atmosphere of the nuclear family."[3]
>
> "Other than the optional first few weeks or months of breast feeding there is no biological connection between the bearing of children and their rearing."[4]
>
> "The home, hallowed sanctuary of bed times and nursery rhymes is of course the seat, the very heart-beat of oppression. . . . To care for 'your own' as opposed to caring for 'everybody'—which is the humanist choice?"[5]
>
> "What goes under the name of good parental care is an elaborate rationalisation of gross possessiveness . . . and provides a manipulative object whereby the parents rationalise their personal dissatisfaction."[6]

Parents Lectured

Parents are lectured for their selfishness in not "diversifying" and spreading their loving care (as if it were marzipan on a cake) over all children.

And when they ask why it is that working all day in some routine employment is better than looking after their children they can find the answer in Juliet Mitchell's book *Women's Estate:*

> "It has always been pointed out by professional women that their absence from work at this juncture has blighted their careers but the significance of working class women's absence from work in their twenties is not seen as important; they are lucky to be out of it. In fact it is critical . . . it is in this age group that commitment to union militancy evolves. This period is the period of adult psychic and political formation."

or in a letter from Irene Fick to the *Morning Star*, "If women's working conditions are bad then we must fight to change them—the answer is not to retreat to the home and do charity work."

Mothers and Children

The famous Dr. John Bowlby dictum of 1947 urged that "prolonged separation of a child from his mother (or mother substitute) during the first five years of life stands foremost among the causes of delinquent character development and persistent misbehaviour". Coming as it did at the end of a period of painful separation and upheaval during the war years it is not surprising that this had an enormous influence on current thinking. Certainly it provided the keystone for the policy for social workers which gave overriding and sometimes disastrous importance to the biological tie, and the theory that almost any home situation was better than removing the child from his parents. It also provided the rationale for sweeping away the child care facilities that of necessity had been established in the war years. While the upper and middle class mother, whether working or not, could pay for the permanent mother-substitute as she had always done, the working class mother could only work on the basis of having her children looked after, and with day nurseries closing down the alternative was improvised child minding, often of a primitive kind.

While there has always been the demand made for day nurseries and facilities for the working mother it has been assumed that the proportion of working mothers of children under five would be small, and therefore the emphasis has been on provision of part-time nursery school facilities designed to *supplement* care by the mother in the home, and of no direct assistance to the full time working mother.

In recent years this emphasis has been sharply challenged by the women's liberation movement who for reasons already explained wish to see all women enabled to work full time, and moreover have added the demand that there should be 24-hour care facilities enabling shift-work and allowing both parents to take part in social, political and trade union activities as well.

[3] Irene Fick. Letter in *Morning Star* June 2nd 1971.
[4] Lee Comer, "The Myth of Motherhood", Spokesman Pamphlet No. 21. 8p.
[5] Nell Myers, *Red Rag* No. 1.
[6] Lee Comer, "The Myth of Motherhood", Spokesman Pamphlet No. 21. 8p.

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They therefore characterise those campaigns for measures to supplement the care of the mother in the home as "overly child orientated"[7] masking the real problem which is to get mothers out of the home and all children cared for socially.

This seems to be a gross over-simplification of a complex problem. While most people would agree that babies benefit from the earliest age by intimate contact with several friendly adults, and that the isolated mother-child pattern is not beneficial to either, this is very different from saying that total nursery care is the answer in any conditions that at present are likely to be available.[8]

In the short waking hours of the early months continuity of handling seems of great importance. Only in this way, when the child is quick to tire, does not benefit from over stimulation, is vulnerable to minor upsets, and is changing every day, can these new patterns be observed, valuable repetition of play routines established, and leisurely assistance given to establish the solid and cheerful hold on life which should be his birthright. Later until he can talk fluently he must rely on those about him to have this continuity of experience to allow him to communicate.

Elisabeth Newson sums it up admirably:

> "The parents intimate knowledge of the child over the years, their role as a memory bank to which he can continually refer for evidence of himself as an individual with a history, plays a part in the development of his own self-image which can hardly be supplied by any other means."[9]

Real People

I am not saying that the absence of this kind of experience is disastrous or that it creates delinquents, but simply that the kind of relationship described seems for many to add a new dimension and delight to the human condition—not unimportant, one would think, for Communists to consider.

It is true that a proportion of children and adults inevitably fall outside the pattern of relationships described and that this is a serious social problem. However it is a very curious and remote logic, totally removed from reality, which says that because of this we must be lectured on the need for an unselfish, non-exclusive universal love. High standards of social morality do not arise from evangelical exhortation but by creating the conditions which allow them to develop.

The fashionable crusade against the family, however correctly its negative features are analysed, is a diversion and divides progressives. We have to deal with real people, as they have evolved under capitalism, with all their defects and inadequacies. These are the people who have to change society and build a new one. Nobody else can do it. And it is arguable that parental love, possessive as it often is, and full of all the inadequacies and problems so graphically described, is nevertheless potentially a positive and dynamic force for social change, and that the family situation itself, given the external circumstances which facilitate this development, could well sustain and encourage those who are fighting for this objective.

[7] A revealing phrase used in an article by Sue Cowley in *Red Rag*. No. 4.

[8] In a society where working hours are short, nursery care is near the place of work, and the staff ratio is high, with easy access by parents, there may well be a new situation to consider. It seems likely that under present conditions many children would find long hours of nursery care exhausting.

[9] National Children's Bureau Conference Papers 1972.

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